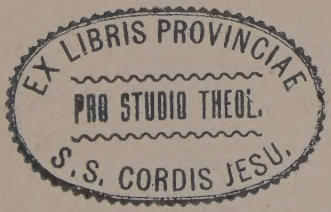
PLAIN SERMONS

BY

REV. THOS. S. DOLAN.

WITHDRAWN



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PREFACE.

The average priest looks with suspicion upon sermon books, because contact with them has not afforded him the desired help in the work of his ministry. He complains that the discourses he finds in books are for the most part, unattractive in form, trite, platitudinarian, or too long if not too short. Unfortunately his complaints are all too well founded, and hence it is with a certain fear and trembling that one dares bring any thing forward in the shape of sermons or conferences. Yet there is a demand for sermon books on the part of the younger clergy, and if the writer understands that demand aright, it embraces first a good-deal of truth, secondly attractive and direct form, and thirdly moderate brevity. A long sermon, though otherwise a meritorious one, is for most people a distinct failure. There are occasions it is true, when a lengthy dis-

course is both expected and required, but these occasions are rare. His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons has said on a number of occasions in the writer's hearing, that generally speaking, a priest has no business in the pulpit for more than half an hour. Most priests will assuredly agree with the Cardinal in this view. The method of memorizing the productions of Lacordaire, Monsabre, Felix, Ravignan, Newman, Hedley and Tyrrell, and declaiming them before American congregations is simply pathetic, yet there are those who adopt this method, and fancy that thereby they advance the ministry of the pulpit. On the other hand, there is an erroneous prejudice among some in favor of a rambling discourse of about ten or fifteen minutes duration, whereby nothing is effected save perhaps a certain irreverence to the word of God.

The following sermons are partly dogmatic and partly moral. That they have many defects the writer is deeply conscious, yet there has been an earnest effort to present some of the truths of religion in a lucid and direct manner, to get away from

platitude in that presentation, and to invest it with a certain freshness. The dogmatic sermons could be utilized for lenten courses and the moral conferences would serve easily for retreats to sodalities or organizations of young men. These of course would have to be supplemented by short instructions, particularly on the worthy reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist.

T. S. D.

St. Marys, Laurel, Md.
1906.

THE SUPERNATURAL KINGDOM

"Give glory to the Lord for He is good for His mercy endureth forever. Let them say so that have been redeemed by the Lord, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy, and gathered out of the countries. From the rising and from the setting of the sun, from the north and from the sea. They wandered in a wilderness; they found not the way of a city for their habitation. And He led them into the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation."

Psalms CVI, 1, 2, 3, 4.

The gentiles sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; they famished for want of spiritual food, and groped about helplessly for want of spiritual light. They felt the need of religion by virtue of a natural heritage bestowed upon man from the beginning, but so corroded were their notions concerning this need, that they extravagantly worshiped their heroes and warriors, their loves and their hates, their virtues and even their most repulsive vices. All flesh had

corrupted its way indeed, and the children of earth lay in a dreadful moral torper. The Almighty looked down upon this dreadful panorama and was moved. There struggled in His heart, (if so I may speak), wrath and mercy, the one aroused at mens' iniquities, the other at the degradation and misery of the creature made to His own image, and lo! mercy triumphed. As the lightning flash rends the inky sky, with a light of dazzling brilliancy, and is followed by the deafening reverberations of thunder, even so, there flashed from Heaven a light that illumined a darksome world, and there was heard a voice that thundered to the uttermost bounds of the earth, a message to the nations, that they should rise up and hearken to the mighty appeal of Eternal love.

The words of the Holy Ghost which I have quoted from the one-hundred and sixth psalm, show forth beautifully and prophetically the result of that merciful appeal of an offended God. "They wandered in a wilderness," says the Psalmist, "in a place without water, they were hungry and thirsty; their soul fainted in them. And they cried

to the Lord in their tribulations; and He delivered them out of their distresses." We cannot but be struck by the heart-rending pathos of these words of inspiration, as they set before us with marvellous realism, the sad condition of the race on account of it's iniquities; and the Almighty appears to us in this beautiful psalm, as not only willing to condone the offenses of men, but as yearning with Infinite love, to lead them to a haven of security. The psalm is, as we have said, prophetic. It points out the vocation of the gentiles through Jesus Christ, and the city of habitation is the kingdom which the Redeemer was to win by His blood, namely, the Church.

It is not our intention to dilate in any general fashion upon this supernatural kingdom, nor indeed to treat in detail its notes and attributes. It will be rather our endeavor, to look upon the Church as a singular fact of history by reason of permanency and cohesiveness, and we will make an effort at explaining why the Church alone possesses these characteristics to any marked degree. Finally we will strive to find the reason why

the Church in the exercise of her beneficent mission among men, has been far more successful than any organized effort for man's uplifting, that the world knows of.

A study of the civil history of the world, even though that study be made after a superficial manner, would reveal to the investigator, a great variety of governmental forms, which have been both prominent and important factors in that history. To instance this truth, we need but mention the monarchial system with all its varieties extending from absolutism to constitutionalism, the obligarchical system, and the various phases of democracy and republicanism. Political sagacity has so far failed to give an unquestionable demonstration, as to which of all these forms possesses the best claims by virtue of its inherent excellence. We, as Americans, naturally feel, and it may be, are for the most part intimately convinced, that our form of government is the best and wisest that the world has ever known. Our adversaries tell us however, and with unquestionable truth, that our governmental form is amenable to the worst species of po-

litical venality. The partisan of a constitutional monarchy, will insist that the conservatism of such a form of government, effects an evenly balanced state of national affairs, which results in permanency, and he will quote history to his advantage. Another will maintain that despotism merits the character of excellence, from the fact that it narrows the horizon of the lower classes, thus limiting their ambitions and desires, and thereby making a happy condition for them, a thing of easy achievement. He will place before us the axiom, which even in this restless age is rather generally accepted, namely, "the fewer the desires, the happier the man." Whatever may be the comparative merits of the various forms, upon this we are bound to agree, that each has done a great work, and when examined in the light of its essential principles, each gives striking reasons why it might last till the end of time. We know however, that these various forms spend their energy with an astounding rapidity, and that the history of peoples is a narrative of change. True, history records examples of national revivals. Thrones

have been rehabilitated, and the one order has been restored again and again. All this however constitutes the history of change and revolution, which are the world's most patent notes.

There is, beloved, in this world of change, one fact, which is a living contradiction of that change and revolution which are so universal. There is a kingdom which has gathered and held under its powerful but benign rule, subjects from every tribe and race under heaven—a kingdom which takes no cognizance of national prejudice or of racial peculiarities. It is a kingdom which is never satisfied with present acquisitions; for it has designs upon the entire world. It is a mighty empire, which numbers its subjects in figures far exceeding those of which most earthly potentates can boast, and this marvelous kingdom, this tremendous fact, is the Church of Jesus Christ. It is the universal brotherhood which is so clear in prophecy, so perfectly set forth in parable, so palpably realized in fact, Beloved, if this striking fact exists in the world, in contradiction to the known data of history, and in contradiction

to the lesson which history teaches, then it follows cogently that in this altogether exceptional kingdom, there must be some element which all others lack—some principle of permanency and continuity which we look for elsewhere in vain.

The striking description which is given in the "Acts of the Apostles" of devout men from every nation, giving their allegiance to the nascent Church on that memorable morn when Peter stood forth and preached the Crucified, would express but very inadequately, the state of affairs now existing in the Church. Well nigh three hundred millions of souls scattered throughout the entire world worship Jesus Christ as members of the Church. There is no physical force to keep this mighty throng together—nor is there any menace of violence held up to those who would desert the ranks, and yet no bond of patriotism that ever attached a man to his country, holds like that link which unites the Catholic to his Church. She stands before the world a permanent, changeless and hence unique fact.

The Church, beloved, is all that she is,

and is so different from everything else in the world, because she is a Divine institution; because in other words, of the supernatural principle that lives in her and dominates her. This is the sole explanation of her existence and her possession of those characteristics, which so thoroughly differentiate her from every other institution that the world has knowledge of, and it is the sole explanation of the marvels she has wrought for man's benefit.

As the results of Raffael's sublimest inspirations, are meaningless, save in a light which will reveal their wondrous beauty; in like manner, unless the light and warmth of the supernatural are brought to bear upon the nature of man, there can be no complete developement or perfection. The world's best efforts have done well for man, but the supernatural only, has really purified and uplifted him, and made him conscious of his own natural dignity. Amongst all those influences which the world has exercised for the development of man, perhaps the two most powerful and farthest reaching in their effects are the civilizations of Greece

and Rome. Such was the civilization of Greece, that after the lapse of hundreds upon hundreds of years since she sat in proud estate upon her archipelago, the names of Athens, Sparta, Corinth and Thermopylae flood the soul with thoughts of glory, of beauty and of loveliness. Greece taught man to reason and philosophize. She taught him to appreciate his intellect as the noblest element of his being. She gave him laws for the preservation of social order. She taught him to know, admire and love the true, the good and the beautiful; and to crystalize his conceptions in imperishable lines and stately, graceful monuments. She filled his soul with patriotism. She attempted at least, to teach him religion. Did she teach him justice or chastity? Did she foster in his soul humanitarian or philanthropic sentiments? No, a thousand times no, to both these queries. The state was made up of one class possessing rights, served by a countless multitude of human beings, who had no place or name in law, save that they were under the complete control of their masters. These slaves were, according to

the declaration of the immortal Aristotle, specifically distinct from those who both ruled and owned them. Greece idealized the lusts of the flesh and worshiped its disorderly cravings, under the title of a divinity. Her selfishness and pride were gigantic. Rome, who, (as says the great Father Lacordaire), imitated more than she created, had in large measure the noble elements of Grecian civilization, but alas! the most depraved features of Greece, were frightfully accentuated throughout the empire of Rome. How may we explain the limitations of the world's best work in the function of uplifting man? Beloved, the work of Greek and Roman civilization was the best which the world unaided could succeed in accomplishing, and the simple reason why more was not effected is, that to do more in the way of perfecting and developing the human being, the supernatural was required—some element superior to nature, which when acting upon it would assist it and raise it above itself, and fill it with a power productive of extraordinary results. This new force would impel man not only to cultivate the rational

faculties of his soul, to study and admire and love the true and the beautiful, but it would efficaciously assist him rightly to know and to adore God, to love justice and hate iniquity, to look upon all men as brothers, to subdue lust to the reign of reason, to have a most sacred regard for marriage, to appreciate properly his immortal soul and to become possessed of a profound conviction, that the care of that soul is incalculably more important than any other of life's concerns.

When that religion spread itself silently, almost insidiously over a degenerate civilization, it renewed the face of the earth; and a new moral universe was the result of it's conquest. A universal brotherhood was formed, in which men recognized each other as children of the one Father who is no respecter of persons. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male or female, there is neither bond or free, for you are all one." (1) Rome was surfeited with power and luxury, and there came into the imperial city, two messengers from out the east, —messengers from the regenerator of soci-

(1) Gal. III. 28.

ety, and with a simple eloquence, unlike the polished oratory of the forum, these men of mean degree, went about infusing the supernatural into a powerful and corrupt organization. "The Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve"-- (1) "Love thy neighbor as thyself." (2) "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but suffers the loss of his own soul?" (3) "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond or free, for you all are one." Such was the burden of their theme, and a mighty conflict was inaugurated. All the furies of hell were let loose against the disciples of regeneration. Fire and sword and every conceivable means of excruciating torture, were utilized, and the blood of martyrs flowed in torrents; but there came a day, when after ages of apparent weakness, the organ of regeneration sat triumphant in the palace of the Caesars, and that organ is the Church of Jesus Christ. The principle which kept her alive during three centuries of existence

(1) Matt. IV. 10.
(2) Matt. XIX. 19
(3) Mark. VIII. 36.

in the catacombs, which preserved her through the most barbarous and decimating persecutions, is the same that ensured her triumph, that rendered her a stable and unchanging kingdom, unlike any other that has figured in the drama of the world's history; and that principle is the supernatural --the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit, the perennial residence of Jesus Christ in her midst.

The fact of her permanency--her changelessness in this "world of mire and change," should impress the thinking world without her fold, with the conviction that the principle of her vitality is other than natural. If these notes were realized in her, by virtue of faithful armed legions, stationed here and there throughout her empire, even then their continuity would be remarkable, but when an unprejudiced mind observes that the armed force of earthly potentates, the attacks of the keenest human intellects, together with the corruption and rebellion of many of her children from within, have in the course of ages effected simply nought against her existence, then that mind I say, must pro-

nounce her absolutely unique, and must seek the sources of her preservation elsewhere than in nature.

When we cast our eyes upon the various sects claiming to be the kingdom of Christ upon earth, what a sad spectacle greets us. The most evident features of Protestantism, are, and have been from the beginning of its lamentable history, schism and disintegration. The very basic principle of protestant systems, which makes every man a law, and I may say a religion to himself, is an all sufficient cause and explanation of this utter lack of union. The negation of the authority which is so fundamental in the Church of Christ, has at last achieved its natural results in the sects calling themselves Christians, namely, indifference towards revealed truth, and the spread of infidelity. What a melancholy transition, as we turn from the contemplation of the Catholic Church to that of the sects. On the one hand we behold the great historic Church stoutly maintaining and zealously guarding the deposit of faith, demanding and obtaining the most unquestioning obedience from her hundreds of

millions of subjects. She is a veritable guide and ruler. On the other hand we observe nothing which seriously deserves the name of organization. We behold individual sincerity, probity and religious sense, but in the sects as presumably organized forms of Christianity, we meet with little serious appreciation of dogma, extreme divergencies of doctrine, and finally loose moral teaching of the most startling character. (1) It would seem that a calm unprejudiced view of the two sides of the picture would carry with it a conviction, that the Catholic Church alone possesses a respectable claim to attention and submission on the part of men.

Let us rejoice and be grateful that God out of His Infinite goodness has "gathered us from the nations," and has brought us into the "city of habitation," and let us always manifest our appreciation of His beneficence by strict conformity to the precepts of our Mother the Church, and by availing ourselves of the means of spiritual strength which she places at our disposal.

(1) This statement concerning loose moral teaching has relation to the general attitude of Protestant Churches towards the marriage bond.

And let us not forget those without groping about for lack of spiritual light. Let us beg Jesus, the lover of souls, to "Enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death," (1) that they may find rest and light, and warmth, in the bosom of His spouse.

(1) Luc. I. 79.

FAITH.

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead." (1)

The opening verses of the ninth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew tell a wondrous story. They are descriptive of an occasion, whereon the refulgent light of Christ's divinity, broke through its sordid habiliments of human nature, and shed a marvellous brilliancy round about him. He went up the mountain a man, apparently no more. He was Jesus, the carpenter's son; nought characterized His appearance especially, save perhaps poverty and extreme simplicity; but lo! arriving at Thabor's summit the humble Nazarene sank from view, and the Divine Christ was enveloped in an aureola of His ancient glory. His garments became whiter than snow, and glistened in the focus of His own glorious rays.

(1) Matt. XVII, 9.

And above Him appeared a cloud more dazzling in its brightness than the gorgeous mists of the east, suffused with crimson and gold—the glory of the rising sun—and from out that cloud came the testimony of the Eternal Father, proclaiming the divinity of the transfigured Savior, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." (2)

The vision on Thabor suggests to us two things clearly observable from a careful perusal of the New Testament. The first of these is the fact, that Christ did not habitually proclaim His divinity, and the second that some of the most remarkable manifestations of His Divine character were hidden from all save a chosen few, as for instance, in the case of His Transfiguration. Jesus Christ stood before the Jews as the perfect fulfilment of type and prophecy. He gave all required proof by way of miracle, to establish in their minds the divinity of His character, and the consequent truth of His doctrine. The Jews however were as Christ himself says, a wicked and perverse genera-

(2) Ibid. 5.

tion, clamoring for signs and wonders, and He declared that the signs which they sought should not be given them. They had lived amidst manifestations of the supernatural. These manifestations indeed, go to make up a very considerable portion of their history. They had been delivered miraculously from the tyranny of Pharaoh; the manna had fallen from God to them famishing in the trackless waste of the desert, the brazen serpent was for them a miraculous talisman; the wand of Moses struck the adamantine rock, and there gushed from its side a crystal stream of living water; and now they refused to acknowledge Jesus as the "Desired of Nations," unless He would startle them by prodigious performances,—unless He would amaze the nation, by wondrous manifestations of His power. This, Christ refused to do. He gave all sufficient evidence, and He was willing to give the grace necessary to accept that evidence, but He declined to satisfy the morbid desire for signs and wonders.

What was the underlying motive of Christ's action? Why did He hide from all

save a chosen few, some of the greatest manifestations of His divinity? Why further, did He lay upon those chosen few an injunction, that they should not propagate the tidings of those wonders which they had been privileged to behold? Why finally did He refuse to show Himself beyond the possibility of doubt the Messiah? All this He did to teach us the nature of faith, and to emphasize the merit of its act.

Faith may be defined as a supernatural and theological virtue, whereby we firmly believe all that God has revealed, and because of the authority of God revealing. It cannot exist in the soul save by supernatural help; it is brought about by the direct action of God in the soul. It concerns itself with supernatural truths, its primary object being of course God, and its motive is the Divine authority of God making a revelation. We believe then not because we may have an analytical comprehension of revealed truth, but because God has revealed it. Hence faith reduces the mind to a sort of captivity, it "Bringeth into captivity every understanding, to the obedience

of Christ." (1) As regards the comprehension of this or that revealed truth, the intellect may be simply blind, and indeed this is frequently the case, since faith requires the accepting of truths, which embody mysteries utterly beyond human ken. The intellect naturally accepts a proposition when the exercise of judgment upon the proposition, has brought about a conviction of its truth. A theorem in mathematics for example, is proposed to me. I accept it only after I have reviewed and accepted the mental process, by which the theorem or proposition is reached. The individual who wishes to convince another, will tell him to examine and see for himself, in order that his conviction may be reasonable. It is true that we often accept statements on the authority of others, but only after the worthiness of their testimony has been solidly established. The soul possessed of the virtue of faith however, does not act thus. It accepts without any such process of judgment. Intrinsic evidence forms no part of its motive. It accepts as we have said because of God's authority

(1) II. Cor. X. 5.

infallible and absolutely secure. The motives of credibility, (that is the reasons by which we may conclude, that such a truth is revealed and therefore credible), such as miracle and prophecy may be scrutinized and tested. They show the reasonableness of faith. It is their proper function to render evident testimony, that this or that doctrine should be accepted as revealed truth, but they can never form the motive of the act of faith itself, for if such were the case, then faith would depend upon motives which should render its exercise plausible to the human intellect. This would destroy the supernatural element in faith, and make the act of faith merely a mental conclusion. Faith therefore is not knowledge, or science, though between faith and science there is no opposition. Science is acquired by reason only: it is founded in natural evidence, whereas faith whether we consider it in the mode of its entrance into our soul, the object with which it concerns itself, or its motive, is entirely supernatural. I do not know the Incarnation, nor the Trinity, much less could I give a scientific demonstration of

either of these mysterious truths. I believe them however, with a certainty far higher and greater than that which science gives, because the source of all knowledge and truth, has revealed them to me through the organ of His revelation. Since faith is not science, one's faith cannot be measured by his intellectual attainments. Hence it is, that in the soul of an untutored savage, faith may be just as real and as living, as in the soul of the most cultured denizen of enlightened society. "Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed," (1) says Christ, and these words of the Redeemer give us a world of teaching on faith. "Seeing" will be the reward of faith, when faith shall blossom into perfect cognition, when all inquiry and speculation shall be swallowed up in the fruition of the most abundant knowledge. The intellect of man shall be tested to its greatest capacity; it shall be filled with God. We need no trumpet-tongued angel to come down from heaven, surrounded by a glory native of his celestial home in the skies, to tell us that Jesus is God, and that He spake

(1) John XX. 29.

a true doctrine. We need not gaze upon the object of our love brilliantly transfigured upon the mountain-top, nor need we feast our eyes upon Him clad in the vesture of His glory, in order to offer Him our homage and adoration. Such manifestations would destroy the merit of our faith, nay more, thus to behold Him, would destroy our faith itself, for it would give us the vision of the blessed. "Now" says the apostle "through a glass, and in a dark manner, but then face to face." (1) Darkly, yes, we listen to the voice of Divine authority, we hear the message, and it overwhelms our poor little minds;—we cannot comprehend it, but we know that it is from God, and so in the loneliness of our hearts we bow submissively and say, "Lord, I believe." But "then face to face," what a ravishing consideration! We shall gaze upon the Ancient of Days seated upon the great White Throne of His majesty, surrounded by every circumstance of splendor. Gazing upon Him, we shall know His Infinite goodness, mercy, power, and shall be filled with the recognition of His perfection and amiability.

(1) I Cor. XIII 12

We live in an age when the lamp of faith has gone out in the souls of many, and when its flame flickers unsteadily in the souls of many more. This is true most particularly in the more educated classes of society, and it is in large measure due to the fact, that there is an unmistakable trend in the direction of measuring the acceptance of religious truths, by the power of understanding them. This of course makes reason superior to revealed doctrine, and it means the rejection of the supernatural, in the act of faith. Many truths of revelation which we are called upon to accept, reek with mystery, as I have already said, and consequently can never be amenable to the judgment of poor human reason. The direct results of the tendency mentioned above, are the repudiation of creed, and liberalism in religion. Intellectual freedom is the plea, and unbelief is the verdict. A large contingent of the learned protestant world, emerges from the study of philosophy today, shorn of all faith in Jesus Christ as God. The ideal of nineteen centuries is dethroned, and reason (helpless substitute), is set up in its place. There are

hundreds of half instructed Catholics, who, sniffing a few breaths in an atmosphere of learning, arrive at the conviction, that their intellectual attainments are such as to cause the faith to loom up before their minds, bristling with difficulties insurmountable. Apart from the fact that a very considerable number of those who claim intellectual difficulties, are not capable of having any, by reason of limited capacity, or inadequate education, it must never be lost sight of, that the Almighty does not intend that we should see the doctrines of our religion in the same manner as we comprehend the solution of a problem in mathematics. This we explained sufficiently in describing the motive of the act of faith.

The most of modern scepticism is traceable to the rebellion of the intellect consequent upon losing sight of the nature of faith as distinguished from science. The natural antecedents of this rebellion are the spirits of pride and sensuality. Moral decay tends to blunt the appreciation of the supernatural, and curiously enough, pride and immorality are boon companions in the human soul.

When the soul is dominated by the notion, that a most desirable portion of lifes possible pleasures is obtainable by the gratification of the sensuous proclivities of the human heart, then the idea of eternal punishment for sin becomes intensely repugnant. The intellect is brought to bear on this and other truths of the faith, with a more or less distinct view to conclude against them, and the full development of the process is the complete annihilation of religious belief.

Though pride and sensuality are prominent causes, by which we may account in large measure for the decay of faith in souls, yet there is another, a cause equally potent perhaps, in producing the same baneful effects, namely false or neglected education.

Education adequately considered, comprises the development of the moral and intellectual faculties of a human being, with that amount of care devoted to his body, necessary for the proper preservation of his health. His religious training can in no wise be separated from his moral development. The highest sanction of moral law, is religious truth. For us who live in the light of faith,

education concerns itself primarily with the truths of Christianity. They have for us an importance immeasurably greater than anything which deals with mere intellectual training. An intellectually trained man who lacks religion is a menace to society. Unfortunately for us, there is a growing tendency to regard the religious element of education as less important than the intellectual. Religious training is not only the principle factor in education, but it is it's regulator and guide. The relegation of religious training to an inferior place in the scheme of education, is productive of two results, namely, indifference regarding the tremendous importance of revealed truth and loss of faith, and of this loss rebellion against those moral restraints imposed by the christian law is a natural consequence.

Though faith is indeed a title for our justification, still of itself it will not justify. The devil has wrought so successfully amongst Christians, that numbers have faith without possessing justification. We see the results of such an anomalous state on every side. What wretched inconsistency

do we behold in hundreds of Catholics, who loudly profess their faith, and yet who lead lives of palpable contradiction to its principles. How intense and even edifying seems the faith of so many who are but poorly advanced in sanctification. We find faith combined with profaneness, with pride, in short with almost complete indifference to moral law.

I have observed during the course of this sermon, that where sensuous passion dominates a soul, there is danger to the faith of that soul; and the observation is beyond controversy, as the experience of those whose business it is to direct souls, amply testifies, yet, on the other hand, we find the faith seemingly unimpaired in sinners of the most depraved type. Our eyes should be ever open to the fact, that no matter how intense our faith, it can never be the sole title for our eternal companionship with God. The faith must be in evidence in our conduct. Our blessed Savior tells us that crying out to the Lord cannot admit us to the light of God's blessed kingdom, but that it is further required of us, that we do the will of His Fath-

er Who is in Heaven. That Will as we know full well, is expressed in the law which emanated from the mouth of God on Sinai terrible with its blinding flashes and reverberating thunders. Faith must be enlivened by the love of God, which is the efficient cause of good works, and without these manifestations of faith, our belief is of no more value to us, than a mere intellectual conviction; it is as the Apostle says 'dead.' "What shall it profit my brethren if a man say he hath faith, but not works? * * * Faith if it have not works is dead in itself." (1) Instead of being a title for our justifitation and salvation it becomes for us the reason of a deeper damnation, than could ever be our lot, had we never known faith, because, if our faith be not enlivened by works, we are in the wretched plight of those who knowing fully the moral consequences attaching to faith, wilfully ignore them.

Let us ask ourselves how we value the inestimable gift of faith? Do we first of all, believe without any suggestion of hesitation or doubt, knowing that faith and doubt are

(1) St. James, II, 14, 16.

incompatible in a soul? Do we surrender our understanding most generously to that captivity which St. Paul calls the obedience of faith—accepting with thanksgiving all that God proposes to us, through the Church, the organ of His revelation, and "the pillar and ground of truth?"(1) Are we profoundly grateful for that supernatural illumination, which the Angelic Doctor calls the germ of our eternal glory? Let us endeavor so to appreciate our faith, that our best energies shall be expended in the direction of making our lives mirror our beliefs. Let us strive to live as men and women walking in the full light of supernatural truth, humbly remembering however that God's beneficence has chosen us from amongst millions, thus making us the particular objects of His selection, in order to bestow this priceless boon of faith upon us, and through no merit of ours. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven." (2) We, beloved, have received the call to sit

(1) Tim. III, 15.

(2) Matt. VIII, 11.

down in God's kingdom. Let us praise and bless the Lord for His goodness. Supplicate Him that we may avail ourselves of our ineffable privileges. Let us also be mindful of those without in the dark, who are turning wistful gazes towards God's blessed city. Lead these, O Lord, into the city of habitation. God grant that when our pilgrimage nears its close, we may be able to say with blessed Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith." (1) Then shall we be entitled to behold Jesus our love, arrayed in brighter splendor than that which enveloped Him on Thabor's height, for we shall see him clad in the vesture of that wondrous majesty, that matchless splendor and glory, which were His before the world was, and in company with those blessed spirits that group themselves about His throne, in company with all that blessed throng, His by the blood which ran adown the wood, and nurtured Golgotha's soil—the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, the chastened sinners and the little ones of His kingdom, we shall praise Him forever and ever.

(1) II Tim. IV, 7.

THE CHURCH THE ORGAN OF REVELATION.

"And if he will will not hear the Church let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican."
Matt. XVIII, 17.

It is unquestionably evident to the most casual reader of the New Testament, that Christ meant to disseminate the benefits of His mission, by means of an organization known as the Church. He chose for the furthering, the continuation of His work, to establish a society which would unite men together in a huge family. Membership in this family, according to the Divine words, was to be a title to participation in the fruits of the Redemption. This sacred brotherhood was to be altogether unique and the chiefest bonds of union, were to be oneness of faith and charity.

"Going therefore," says Christ to His first ministers, "teach ye all nations—baptizing them in the name of the Father and

of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (1) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved—he that believeth not shall be condemmed." (2) Let us examine the words of our Lord in order to be penetrated by a conviction as to their consequences. "As the Father sent me I also send you." (3) That is "I constitute you my executors." By the exercise of His boundless power, He could have conveyed the message of His truth, directly to each and every soul. One act of His will would have been all sufficient, to bring about this wondrous result, yet in His Divine wisdom, He deemed it expedient to do otherwise. "With the same power as that by which my Eternal Father has sent me into the world", (so we may paraphrase the text) "so do I send you to carry my Gospel before the nations of the earth. I constitute you the teachers of all nations. Teach them to observe all things which I have commanded you. Hence Teach my

1. Matt. XXVIII, 19, 20.
2. Mar. XVI, 16.
3. Joan. XX, 21.

Gospel. Preach not what to your individual intellects may seem Divine truth; but My Gospel My moral code. From your lips then shall the nations hear My Message. Ye shall teach and they shall sit at your feet as pupils and learn the lesson of eternal life". From the words of Christ, all possibility of another organ of His revelation is excluded; and there is not so much as the shadow of an indication that Christ wished to reveal His Doctrines directly and immediately to the individual soul. When the Divine Teacher said: "Going therefore, teach all nations," He excluded the idea of the individual teaching Himself, or seeking by Himself the deposit of faith--the revealed doctrines once delivered to the Apostles. Such a method of arriving at the knowledge of His revelation could never have been in the plan of Jesus Christ, for it would render the appointing of teachers for the nations, not only unnecessary, but preposterous. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians declares that the desire of Christ is "That we all meet in the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God,--that henceforth we be no

more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine." (1) The idea of a teaching Church,—an organ, an interpreter of revelation, is then fundamental in the New Testament. Protestants, though adhering to the idea of a Christian Church, nullify its mission, by insisting upon the right of private judgement, which might be termed the key-stone of Protestantism itself. The theory of private interpretation of God's Word clearly undermines the teaching authority of the Church and in large measure, renders a church superflnous. The Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Sts. Peter, John, Paul, Jude and James, furnish us with abundant information regarding the manner in which the Apostles preached Christianity; and the most pronounced feature of their preaching was insistence upon submission on the part of those to whom they addressed themselves. "We give thanks to God," says St. Paul, "without ceasing because when ye had received from us the word of hearing, which is of God, ye

1. Eph. IV, 13, 14.

received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed) the word God." (1) In another place the same Apostle writes, "He who despiseth these things despiseth not man but God, who hath given in us His Holy Spirit." (2) These words are not startling or remarkable to the mind of him who has pondered the words of Christ to His Apostles, "He that heareth you heareth me; he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me." (3) St. Peter assures us that the difficulties of St. Paul's epistles are such that the unlearned and unstable wrest them, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction. (4) There is nowhere to be found the merest hint or suggestion of submitting the teaching of Christ to the individual mind. "How shall they hear without a preacher," says the Apostle, "Faith cometh by hearing," (5) not therefore by the exercise of private judgment. Strange indeed, Beloved, that the Spirit of God should inspire private searchers with

1. 1 Thes. II, 13.
2. ibid. IV, 8.
3. Luc. X, 16.
4. 2 Pe. III, 16.
5. Rom. X, 15; 17.

religious conclusions both at variance with, and in opposition to, one another, and that all should be considered truth. Strange too, beyond all explanation, that men the most ignorant, who can hardly gather the ideas of a news item, should be able to comprehend unaided, all that is necessary in the supernatural order;--I say advisedly unaided, for nowhere did Christ promise to teach otherwise than through His Church. The reading of Scripture, the principal fount of revelation, is a holy action. It conduces to the benefit of one's soul; but only when guided by that authority against which the "gates of hell," that is the powers of darkness, the shadows of error, shall never prevail. A knowledge of Christ's revelation, adequate and secure, and an assent to the same, is simply outside the reach of individual effort. Some souls are saved, it is true, without a detailed knowledge of the faith of Jesus Christ; and without an explicit assent to all His doctrines, but this is realized only where honesty and sincerity supply the deficiency. The most palpable effect of the propaganda of indivi-

dual interpretation, of self teaching, (if I may be allowed the expression), is seen in the multiform ramifications of Protestantism. It is not only a fact acknowledged on all hands, that the grand divisions of Protestantism differ from each other on doctrinal matters of grave importance,—(each claiming however the possession of truth, yet curiously enough, repudiating the idea of church-infallibility,) but it is likewise true, that within the bosom of each sect, there exist the most startling divergencies of belief concerning most important portions of Christ's revelation. The rejection of a church as the sole guardian and custodian of revelation, and as the sole teacher and guide of men in the matter of faith, is fast achieving its logical result in the melancholy spread of infidelity. There is a wave of indifferentism sweeping over the country and causing a veritable epidemic of unbelief in the Divine character of Christ, and consequently in the Divine authority of His teaching. The gospel is regarded by many who call themselves Christians, simply as a wonderful literature, embodying a high

moral teaching. Again there is a large number of Christians, (so called at least), whose appreciation of revealed doctrine amounts to little beyond the acceptance of a few of the fundamental truths of Christianity, and whose religion is simply a sort of philanthropy and benevolence.

Let us briefly study the authority of the Church somewhat more in detail. That she must possess a certain authority, flows necessarily from the words of our Lord sending His Apostles as teachers. How are they sent?—"As the Father sent me so I send you." Hence they go to the fufillment of their mission by the authority of Jesus Christ. Armed with that same authority, with which the Father invested Him, they go forth to command attention and submission. "He that heareth you heareth me." "He that despiseth you despiseth me." "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." (1) The very notion of teacher imports the idea of some authority, but the fact of Divine appointment—the bestowal on

1. Matt. XVIII, 17.

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the part of God himself, of a commission to teach, means such a teaching authority as cannot be disregarded, save by contemning Divine authority itself The Apostles were therefore commissioned as rulers and teachers at the same time. The concept of an organized Church, such as Christ clearly ment to establish, includes the notion of authority, otherwise there would not be the slightest guarantee against disruption, disintegration and ruin. Furthermore, He gave His Apostles powers, the confering of which is intelligible only upon the supposition of such authority as I am maintaining. Says Christ to Peter: "To thee will I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven"—Whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven," (1) and furthermore to all the Apostles gathered together—"whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven." (2) St. Paul exposes the duty of Christians regarding Church authority in his letter to the Hebrews. "Remember your prelates who have spoken the word of God to you,—whose

1. ibid. XVI; 19. 2. Matt. XVIII, 18.

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faith follow." "Be not led astray," says he, "with various and strange doctrines—Obey your prelates, and be subject to them."(1) The idea of a teaching and ruling authority in the Church, is just as fundamental in the Gospels, as is the notion of an institution known as the Christian Church itself. One necessarily flows from the other. For Jesus Christ would have sent His teachers into the world but half epuipped, if He had not invested them with power to command.

Our Divine Lord came upon earth, not for one generation or one people. He came for all times and all peoples. This is evident from the words which I have quoted several times duriug the course of this sermon. "Preach to all nations," "Every creature," "I am with you all days." (2) We conclude from this, dearly beloved, that the Church with all the essential elements of its constitution is just to-day, what it was when He founded it: and one of these essential elements in its constitution, without which the Church is truly unthinkable, is authotity.

1. Heb. XIII, 7, 8, 17. 2. Matt. XVIII, 21.

This Church, can never become inefficient for the fulfilment of its mission, since Christ is with it continually; "Behold I am with you always;" and again, He promised that the powers of evil should never bring about its destruction. Hence it will not only always exist, but it will exist with the same degree of competency as that which characterized it in the beginning. It will never deviate from the path of truth; it will always preach and teach the Gospel which it received from its Divine Founder. The revelation of Jesus Christ, and that alone, will form the burden of its message to men. It will remain ever faithful to the original purity of Christ's truth, and consequently it will never lead men astray. All this flows logically from the promise of the Saviour to make His presence in the Church perennial, and His assurance that it is firmly built upon a rock, and is immune from the powers of hell. If He is in the Church, He is active in its interest, ever watchful for its welfare, and the preservation of its original truthfulness is of primary importance in that welfare. Further than this, if for a little

while, the Church could teach its children erroneously, the promise of her Founder that the powers of error should never prevail against her, would become null and void. When about to leave His Church upon earth, as far as His visible presence was concerned, He made a promise which guaranteed her infallibility, "When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will teach you all truth." (1) If the spirit of truth dwelleth in the bosom of the Church, and if He will abide with it forever, ever active in teaching us all truth, then, those whose happy lot is cast within the fold need have no fear of being "tossed about, to and fro, and carried away by every wind of false doctrine." The Church then, Beloved, which Christ established for the benefit of men, as the means to lead them to the fulfillment of their ultimate destiny, rejoices in authority, indefectibility and infallibility.

A Church not in possession of these attributes cannot be the expositor of the revelation of Jesus Christ. She would not be a secure guide, she could give no guar-

1. Joan, XVI, 13.

antee that she possessed the power of leading men aright, hence she would be manifestly inefficient, for the fulfillment of Christ's intention in establishing His Church. And as you know, Beloved, no church claims these attributes save that one to which by an ineffable grace we belong. The idea of an infallible teaching authority, is repudiated by every phase of Protestantism, and as regards indefectibility, I should say that the obvious disintegration of Protestantism is a sufficient proof that it has no capacity for continued organized existence. On the other hand we see our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church, stoutly maintaining and proving to the world the possession of these three great attributes, which are the results of Christ's establishing a church at all. She maintains to-day what she maintained in the days of Paul. She has never shifted her position, nor can she, for she is rendered immovable by the power that built her up. She is old but the traces of age are not visible upon her face; the stamp of eternal youth is upon her brow. She has struggled against fearful odds; she has seen

much affliction, nay she has felt it; perecuted from without for three centuries during which the blood of her children flowed in mighty torrents, "touched" as says Lacoidaire, "by every power during two thousand years, scrutinized by every science, cursed by every blasphemy, yet she remains the most colossal fact that the world knows of." "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robe walking in the greatness of his strength. * * * Why is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread the wine press? I have trodden the wine press alone." (1) She is in very truth "That Rock against which the proud gates of hell shall not prevail."(2) Says the Count de Maistre, "Between heaven and earth this marvel has been suspended for eighteen centuries; if you do not see it what would you see?" Yes Beloved, what would you see? Hanging in mid-air, so to speak, in view of the entire world, its credentials are palpable to all who would but look, and they proclaim the Church invincible—Divine.

1. Isais, LXIII, 1, 2, 3. 2. Aug. De Civitate Dei.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

"Ego sum panis vitae."
"I am the bread of life."
1 Joan VI, 46.

It is with a deep sense of His own unworthiness and incapability that the minister of God should approach the task of exposing any doctrine of revealed religion; for if he reflects but a little, he realizes that he stands between God and his creature man, and that in preaching God's word, he is in very truth God's ambassador. If this sense of unworthiness and incapability should find place in his soul no matter what portion of revelation be his theme, how completely should he be dominated by this consciousness, when his subject is the presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, a most central fact of Christianity, the heart and soul of the Church. It is a subject the very mention of which should cause the heart of the Christian to pulsate with joyous emotion, for it illustrates more clearly than

aught else, how near to us is Jesus; it convinces us more than every thing else, of His ineffable love for our poor souls, and it inspires us above all things else, with unquestioning confidence in His goodness and mercy.

It is the habitual custom of our Blessed Saviour to teach great truths with majestic simplicity. This characteristic is most palpable both in the words whereby He promised the eucharistic presence, and those with which He instituted it. Few if any of the chapters that make up the New Testament are more striking than the sixth chapter of the Holy Gospel of St. John. The wonderful description of feeding the multitude with the five loaves and two fishes; of Christ walking upon the waters; the sermon on faith and its effects in the souls of men; and finally the astounding promise of Jesus Christ, that He would give His flesh and blood for spiritual food and drink--all these, I say, render this chapter one of the most remarkable in the inspired volume. In the thirty-fifth verse of this chapter, Christ declares Himself to be the bread of life. "I

am the bread of life." He speaks, however, but in a figure; "He that cometh to me shall not hunger; he that believeth in me shall never thirst." (1) He then discourses upon faith in Himself and its great reward. Concluding His words upon faith in the forty-seventh verse, He begins a new member of His discourse with the words, "I am the bread of life," but the figure has died upon His lips, and He speaks in a most realistic manner of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, "I am the living bread which came down from Heaven." "If any man eat of this bread; he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." (2) His hearers are astounded. They are aware that He speaks no longer in metaphor, and they find His declaration repugnant; they are (if I may dare use the expression) disgusted. Striving among themselves the Jews ask, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat." (3) "This saying is hard, and who can hear it." (4)

1 Joan, VI, 36.
2 Ibid, 51, 52.
3 Ibid, 53.
4 Ibid, 61.

So very startling were His words that some who had been His disciples deserted Him and walked no more with Him. Did Christ turn to those misguided souls, who were wandering from the source of light and truth, and tell them apologetically that He spake but in a figure? Far from it. He simply asks the Twelve if they too will go. "Amen, amen, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you." (1) "My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." (2) Far from apologizing Beloved, He intensifies and emphasizes what He had said before, nay, more, He declares the eating of His flesh a necessary condition for the possession of spiritual life. There is absolutely nothing in the whole context, to allow us to conclude that Our Blessed Lord desired to explain away or rentrench anything that he had said, and the declaration that His "flesh is verily and indeed meat," and His "blood verily and indeed drink,"

1 Joan VI, 54.
2 Ibid, 56.

precludes forever the figurative interpretation of Christ's expression. Such words would have been a lie upon the lips of Divine Truth if they were meant to convey a figure of speech. It would have been most incongruous and utterly misleading on the part of Christ to associate a figurative meaning with such expressions. Christ's aim in assuming human nature, was to call sinners to repentance, and afford to men an opportunity of achieving salvation from which they had been excluded by the infidelity of our first parents. The Saviour's life and particularly His death, amidst all the horrors of Golgotha, show forth the ardor and love with which He prosecuted the end He had in view. How inconsistent then with His purpose, how inexplicable in the light of His boundless love for the souls of men, was His apparent indifference to those of His disciples who "went back and walked no more with Him," if He intended to speak only in a figure, the dreadful realism of which shocked them? No, beloved, the Redeemer was dreadfully in earnest when promising to His disciples the institution of

that heavenly banquet, that has been the joy and comfort of the Church during the nineteen hundred years of her existence. It has been the fortitude of her martyrs, the food for which the saints have famished, the bread of angels, the wine that springeth virgins, the true Pasch of which the old was but a figure, nay, the merest shadow.

We naturally look for a fulfillment of these wondrous words, whereby Our Blessed Lord promised to feed us with His flesh and blood, and the fulfillment is not far to seek. The scene is laid in the cenacle, and it is the eve of that sublimest of dramas, most awful of tragedies. The Saviour is seated with His beloved apostles for the last time. We can fancy without any stretch of imagination, the wistful expressions of fear and expectancy upon the faces of those beloved ones who had shared His joys and sorrows during His entire public life, and now were about to lose Him. His heart was bursting with love, and He desired to leave them some memorial, some token of His infinite charity, whereby they would remember Him in His death. All things lay within His choice.

The most precious treasures hidden within the bosom of the earth, nay more, the gift of empires and kingdoms, all these were absolutely within His power. But the gift which He desired to leave as a memorial must adequately represent His limitless love for the souls of men, and this could not be realized unless He gave them the best in His power. "Jesus took bread, and blessed and broke, and gave to his disciples and said: This is my body--take ye and eat." And taking the chalice He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood." (1) The mind is overwhelmed at the contemplation of these wondrous expressions. Mystery of faith! A God gives Himself--surrenders Himself to His unworthy creatures, in the guise of one of the lowliest supports of animal life. O mystery of Divine condescension? O abysmal depths of Divine love! If the great Bernadin of Sienna had reason to cry out despairingly "I know not with what praises I can rightly extol thee, O Mary;" with how much greater

1 Matt. XXVI, 26, 27.

cause may we exclaim, who will describe the self abasement, the wondrous charity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharistic Sacrament? His delight is to be with the children of men, and how strikingly does He gratify this craving in the Sacrament of the Altar. What sort of union is that which Jesus Christ establishes between Himself and the soul of man in this sacrament? Closer by far than that which exists between the hearts of friends; closer by far than that which unites a husband to his spouse, for it is a union whereby He becomes our very food and drink, whereby we become part of Him and he of us; a union in fine which allows the Christian soul to say in very truth: "I live now not I, but Christ liveth in me." (1) That ineffable love which prompted the heart of the Redeemer to this wondrous condescension was not satisfied that its fruits should be the boon of those beloved ones who sat about the table eating with Him the last Pasch. Looking with prophetic eyes down through the ages, He beheld countless millions, whom He loved

1 Gal. II, 20.

with the same ardor as that which characterized His charity for His apostles. And in order that this mighty throng might possess this same source of spiritual nourishment, He lays upon His first priests a commandment, that they should continue the mysteries which He had just enacted:—"Do this, says He to His apostles, for a commemoration of me." (1) That is to say, do what I have done. Change bread and wine into my body and blood. Continue in an unbloody and mystic manner the sacrifice which I shall offer on the morrow upon Gologotha's bloody altar. Pour out upon the nations, the torrent of my blood, feed them with my flesh until I come. From that moment, beloved, began the sacrifice of that clean oblation so beautifully described by the prophet Malachy. "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will not receive a gift from your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean

1 Luc XXII, 19.

oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles said the Lord of hosts." (1) How literally is this prophecy fulfilled, for verily there is sacrifice in every place. Whether it be in the centres of civilization and culture, or amidst barbarous and savage hordes, or upon the bleak expanse of desert land, everywhere the clean oblation, the mystic sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ has been offered, and the name of Jehovah has been rendered great. Such is daily the case upon our altars, and when we cease the morning sacrifice, it is offered and renewed again and again in other portions of this revolving sphere "from the rising of the sun until the going down."

O beloved, did we but know our treasure in this marvelous sacrifice, in which Christ is not only the object of our love and adoration, but our very food, our souls would be filled with continuous rapture. "He hath made a memorial of his wonderful works—being a merciful and a gracious Lord. He hath given food to them that fear Him." (2)

1 Mal. I, 10, 11.

2 Ps. CX, 4, 5.

The Sacrifice of the Mass and consequent presence of Jesus Christ in our sanctuaries, entail moral consequences upon those who know by faith this eucharistic presence. These moral consequences take the form of duties to the Sacramental God. They might be considered readily under many heads, but may be profitably summed up under the titles of adoration, communion, love and reparation.

Adoration, because in the little disc which seems such an insignificant trifle in the hands of the priest, we recognize the Infinite majesty, power, greatness and absolute perfection of God. These utterly inanimate and powerless signs veil the entire personality of Jesus Christ, God like the Father. Hence we adore, we prostrate ourselves, we burn incense, we offer to this august sacrament of the New Law, the supreme honor, which the angels pay to the Triune God seated upon the throne of His splendor and majesty.

If we have in mind the motive of Jesus Christ in instituting the Blessed Sacrament, we cannot but conclude that communion

must be among our most prominent duties. "If any man eat of this bread," says Christ, "he shall live forever." (1) "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life." (2)Our Blessed Lord insists most unmistakably upon the eating of His flesh, as the most prominent end He had in view in instituting this wondrous dispensation of grace. He not only invites and exhorts us to feed at this heavenly banquet, but insists in a most stringent manner that participation in this Divine food is a necessary condition for the possession of spiritual life. "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, you shall have no life in you." (3) Most closely does He identify Himself with the worthy communicant. "As the living Father sent one and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same shall live by me." (4) He does not limit His invitation to this feast, nay, it is with a sort of abandon that He surrenders Himself to His creatures. Hence we are forced into the

1 Joan. VI, 52.
2 Ibid, 55.
3 Ibid.
4 Joan VI, 58.

conviction that in bestowing upon us this wondrous boon, Christ desired more than aught else that union with us, which is effected only by sacramental communion.

What shall we say of the duty of love? We do not speak here of that love which is due to Our Blessed Lord by virtue of the fact that, as God He is infinitely amiable and hence worthy of all our heart's love. Here we are considering that love to which He has a special title because of His institution of the Sacrament of the Altar. It is that love which has its foundation in gratitude. The world, though cold and irreligious, though indulgent for the most part to the foibles, follies and sins of the human heart, loathes an ungrateful man. The heart that remains frozen under the warm touch of kindness, that knows nothing of tender appreciation of benefits and blessings received, is repudiated by the voice of nature independently of religion. And we see the reasonableness of such a loathing and such a repudiation. If then we must kiss the hand that blesses us; if we must meet kindness with kindness; who shall tell the nature of our debt

to Jesus Christ for the institution of the sacrament of love. Love begets love, and the love begotten is qualified in large measure by the love which is its cause. Our Blessed Saviour was not satisfied with exchanging the vesture of His glory, for the miserable habiliments of human nature in order to manifest His love for us. He was not content to live a life begun in the circumstances of poverty, continued first in humblest seclusion, and then in the midst of persecution, contumely, misrepresentation, and terminated in deepest degradation. All this did not satisfy the cravings of His boundless love. It was necessary that he should exhaust His Divine resources (if so I may speak) by bestowing His own sweet self upon us. Had we all the ardor of thrones, dominations, cherubim and seraphim, we could not offer in return a love which would be remotely adequate. The fact that we are unable to offer to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament a fitting tribute of love is easy of comprehension, poor little creatures that we are, so weak and so limited; but how inexplicable the fact that we

are almost indifferent, nay, many of us actually so, to the eucharistic presence of our Redeemer. He has reduced Himself to our level, He has lowered Himself to the common-place for us, and we in turn despise Him. He assumes the role of an humble pleader, asking us to take Him into our hearts, and to give Him our love in return for inestimable graces, and a guarantee of eternal life, and we turn a deaf ear to His entreaties. Alas! the ingratitude, the coldness, the indifference to Jesus upon His sacramental throne, is almost as difficult of comprehension as the unspeakable bounty realized in the Blessed Sacrament itself.

Reparation! How clear its necessity. Who will enumerate the insults and injuries which Christ receives in this Sacrament at the hands of unfaithful Christians, by their neglect and coldness, but worse than all, by their sacrilegious traffic in the all pure blood of the Lamb of God? The malice of the soul who is willing to imprison the body and blood of Jesus Christ in a polluted dwelling house, surely equals the treason of the Iscariot. And yet we know that this be-

trayal is committed in our midst. Thanks to God this monstrous iniquity is far from common, but the lesser sins against this mystery of love are without number; external disrespect, by the omission of those acts with which we should greet Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament on coming into His presence, by acts of positive irreverance, or finally by desertion; for often it is only the tiny glimmer of the sanctuary lamp that does Him honor. Weeks and months and years we sacrifice in burning incense at the altar of mammon, and we find it difficult to steal a few little moments from the noise and bustle of the world and the distraction of its interests, to whisper our love to Jesus Christ, who watches through the long hours of the day, and the drear vigils of the night, waiting for His beloved ones to come and adore and receive of the abundance of His goodness.

Beloved, let us inspect our consciences with severity, to find out the measure of our infidelity to Jesus in the Sacrament of His love. Have we adored with frequency and reverence? Have we famished for this bread of

life, and have we zealously striven to share the bounty of this heavenly banquet frequently and worthily? Have we loved? Have we offered our poor hearts such as they are to Jesus in return for His measureless generosity? Have we sent up acts of contrition and reparation for the multitudinous sins of men against the Blessed Sacrament? Alas, our scrutiny will reveal many shortcomings even in the souls of the fervent. Let us endeavor to know what should be our relations to our Redeemer in this institution, this greatest dispensation of His mercy. And let us ask Him in this sacrament wherein He is so nigh unto us, to illumine our minds and move our poor stolid hearts, that we may understand in some little measure His love, and endeavor to appreciate it. In this sacrament, we have the cure of every species of moral leprosy, the main source of spiritual strength, of fortitude and fervor, and the truest guarantee of eternal life. "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life and I will raise him up on the last day."

THE SAINTS OF GOD.

"Let us now praise men of renown * * * men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed. Good things continue with their seed. * * * Their name liveth unto generation and generation. * * Let the people show forth their wisdom, and the church declare their praise." (1)

One of the most ancient as well as one of the noblest customs recorded in the world's annals is that of honoring her great men. One of the most ancient because we find it in the early morn of the world's history; one of the noblest, since its final cause or motive is to hold up virtue and great achievement for our admiration and imitation. The names of Homer, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pericles, Alexander, Cæsar, Hortentius, Cicero, Horace, Virgil, Charlemagne, Dante, Angelo, Rafael, Shakespeare, Milton, and a thousand others, are all emblazoned in the temple of Fame. These men live in history as the world's great thinkers and warriors; singers and painters.

1 Ecclus XLIX.

The church, too, honors her great men and her heroes. From the inception of the ecclesiastical year until its close, every day the saints of the church are the theme of her praise and thanksgiving. As the world builds up monuments to perpetuate the glory of her children, likewise does the church, to honor those whom she looks upon as the most faithful representatives of Christ.

If we examine, after a critical fashion, the several methods of conferring honor, practiced, respectively, by the world and the church, we will observe that the world practices a certain prodigal generosity, but the church on the contrary bestows her honors with a careful, nay, almost parsimonious hand. One brilliant flash, one startling achievement and the world is satisfied. The individual whom she honors may be below mediocrity in a variety of ways; morally, he may be sunk in an abyss of filthiness, yet so long as he arouses the world's attention and admiration by some striking or brilliant performance, she crowns him with the laurels of fame.

The church has her measure of praise for every act of remarkable virtue, but no such isolated act constitutes a title to her honors. The man whom she places upon her altars must be, as I have said, a faithful representative of Christ, of his love, his actions, his power even. It must further be clear that he is a special instrument in the hands of the Almighty, for the redemption of souls. The most fundamental element in the title to the church's honor is personal sanctity, and of this the primary constituent is conquest of self. What an arduous achievement conquest of self really is. It is easier to overcome armies than to subjugate the host of passions that struggle for ascendency within us. The names of Gaul, Helvetia, the Rubicon and Pharsalia tell the story of the mighty dominating soul of Cæsar; but written side by side with the narrative of his glory, is the history of that degrading servitude in the thraldom of which he was held by his ignoble passions. Such was often the case among those, the might of whose arms conquered nations, yet who, in turn, were ruled by the worst passions that agitate the

human heart. Purity, temperance, self-denial, the brave endurance of pain, charity, humility, fortitude and justice—these are the personal characteristics of the saints. No single Christian virtue, no matter how emphasized in a soul, will make a saint, but rather the combination of all those blessed virtues, which were so palpable in the life of him who said "Learn of Me, (1) I am the way." (2)

Were we to go a step farther in the prosecution of this comparison between the heroes of the world and the heroes of the church, we would see that in the matter of external conquest, the work of the saints is worthy of the greater consideration. The nation deprived of its liberty and subjugated by an alien conquerer, bides the time when fortune will furnish an opportunity of regaining what was lost. The dying gladiator pouring forth the ruby tide, with which went out his life, died with hatred and revenge in his heart. Prometheus chained to the rock was yet unconquered, and in his fetters

1 Matt. XI, 29.

2 Joan XIX, 6.

cast defiance at his august torturer. The conquests of the saints were not of blood, but they reached to the very hearts and souls of men, whom they led captive in mighty throngs to the feet of Christ. They conquered not for self-aggrandizement, but that they might liberate their captives from the slavery of error and sin, and bestow upon them the liberty of the sons of God.

It is curious, indeed, that for honoring these special servants of Christ, the Catholic church is so severely arraigned by those outside her pale, who call themselves Christians. The attitude of the church towards the saints is set forth with striking exactness in the words of Holy Writ which I have used as a text. "Let us praise men of renown. * * let the church declare their praise." The spouse of Christ obeys this injunction of the Holy Ghost with joy and alacrity. Well does she know that "good things continue with their seed." She holds up the example of their beautiful lives and encourages us to imitate their virtues. She unfolds to the tempted and discouraged, the temptations and the victories of those

blessed ones. To the sinner she unfolds the sinfulness and mayhap degradation of some heart, which by a miracle of God's love was changed, like that of Augustine, to a sanctuary of purity and holiness. The church not only holds up the lives of God's blessed ones for our admiration and encouragement, but realizing their power as they stand before the throne of Christ, their great exemplar, when chanting their praises, she begs them to pray for us. She does not beg of them grace or mercy, knowing full well, that these gifts are not at their disposal; but she begs them use their power in the exercise of charity, by offering to Christ in our behalf the sweet incense of prayerful suffrage. They have run successfully in the course, they have "fought the good fight" victoriously, and while praising their achievements in the spiritual order, our Holy Mother bids them as it were, remember the days of their pilgrimage, with its struggles, its heart-burnings and temptations, and to sympathize with us yet striving with the world, the flesh and the devil.

Another feature of the church's attitude toward the saints, is that of placing their images and relics in places of respect, and demanding for them veneration. Our separated brethren have not hesitated to accuse us of idolatry on this account. Needless to state beloved, the honor or veneration which we accord the image of a saint or his relic, has not its term in the carved image or in the fragment of a bone or a garment. The honor paid is simply of a relative character, such as that which we pay to a mother's portrait, or the statue of the Father of his Country, with this distinction; that the veneration of the image or relic of a saint is purely a religious act, whereas the other need not possess any religious characteristic whatever. We honor the relic of the saint, because of the saint, just as in turn we honor the saint because of Christ. Whatever is of excellence or virtue in the saint, is simply a reflection of the goodness, the holiness of Jesus Christ. We honor the saint because of Jesus Christ, whom he faintly reproduces; and it is solely that reproduction which is the cause of our veneration.

The world which reproaches the church for her devotion to the saints, and her regard for their images and relics, places itself in a ludicrously inconsistent position. She erects statues of her heroes and hedges them about with marks of profound respect. Go into her historical museums, and note there the accumulation of relics of every description, including even, old and ragged apparel. All these are jealously and sacredly guarded, because, forsooth, this sword belonged to the hero of such a battle; this cannon ball caused the death of such a patriot; and this old mantle covered the form of some "rag-clad Jove" of history. All this is perfectly proper and normal; but why then does the world, and even the Christian world outside the church (if so I may speak), upbraid and revile the spouse of Christ, for honoring after the same manner, the great servants of the Master.

Abraham fell down in adoration before the angels sent to him by God; Josue when confronted by the angel who called himself the prince of the army of the Lord, prostrated himself before the angelic spirit.

"Go to my servant Job * * * he will pray for you," (1) says the most high. It is not marvelous then, that at the very dawn of Christianity, we find prayerful honor offered by the disciples of Christ to their brethren who had gone before, by the royal road of the Cross, to the enjoyment of God's blessed vision. The most ancient liturgies, the earliest monuments, especially in the catacombs, testify unmistakably to the practice of honoring and invoking the saints. How thoroughly reasonable, inspiring and stimulating, are both the practice and the doctrine which underlies it. If the angels hear our prayers and offer them to God, as the Inspired Word tells us in the book of Tobias, and if there is joy among those blessed spirits upon the repentance of a sinner, what argument can be adduced to prove that the brethren triumphant in heaven, can neither hear or attend my supplication. The inspiration and incentive furnished by the Catholic doctrine upon this point are quite beyond the realm of dispute. When I am confronted by the wonderful effect of cor-

1 Job XLII, 8.

respondence to the grace of Jesus Christ, as it is seen in the lives of the saints, am I not filled with the idea of what is possible in my own case—for surely that grace has not ceased to abound. And though I may not be called to the heights of perfection, as were these altogether chosen souls, yet I am impelled to do my little best, stimulated by their illustrious example. I am encouraged and uplifted by their help. Ignatius of Loyola was a worldling of a pronounced type, and we have no special reason to believe that he was free from the vices of the society in which he lived; yet such was the powerful influence brought to bear upon his soul by the perusal of the lives of the saints, that his own sanctity, and the existence of the Society of Jesus are directly traceable to it. Saints beget saints in God. The heroic practice of virtue in one age of the church is the inspiration to those of following generations, and the fruit of that inspiration is more sanctity, more heroism for God's blessed sake. Who can ever recount the marvels which have resulted from the church's action in holding up the virtues of

the saints before the eyes of the faithful? How the stories of the martyrs thrill the soul (even of a child) and create the desire of suffering something for Christ's sake. The touching picture of the tender little Agnes, withstanding the might of an emperor, in her determination to keep unsullied her purity and to die rather than be faithless to her crucified spouse; the brave Cecilia valiantly offering her neck to the executioner; the dauntless Sebastian heroically baring his breast to arrows; the intrepid boy Pancratius standing in the arena with the strength of the Lion of Judah in his soul, these and a thousand others teach us lessons in the value of faith, fortitude and perseverance in the service of God, even under the greatest difficulties. When the church emerged from the catacombs and caves of the earth, and began to breathe the air of freedom, she ceased not to furnish abundant examples of marvelous sanctity, and such has been her history in every age; men and women in every clime devoting all the energy of their beings to the extension of Christ's kingdom, by personal sanctifi-

cation, and by ministering to the every need of their brethren. What an uplifting of his age, was caused by the gentle Francis of Assisi, with his burning, nay, consuming love of God, and love of all creatures in God. How many were led to forsake the world and its dangers, led captive by his words of humility and detachment from earthly things—words reinforced by the shining light of his example. Did these wonderful effects cease at his death? No, for the doctrines of the church concerning the veneration and honor of the saints, have given St. Francis a continued vitality, and today, thousands of his children are practicing his virtues and continuing his work. How many a young Levite's heart has been fired with the desire to save souls to Christ, by the all devouring love of St. Francis Xavier. How many a woman of the world has been encouraged to forsake vanity and luxury, and live apart from the world in penitential contemplation; or, if in the world, to live solely for the exercise of Christian charity, by the examples of St. Theresa, or of St. Elizabeth, of Hungary. Every saint is a

light to the world, and each one that has been placed upon our altars, helps us to understand one phase or another of that one great mystery, namely, the mystery of our redemption through the Cross.

Let us then rejoice that God is so wonderful in his saints, that He has condescended to raise poor fallen human nature to such heights of perfection, and that He has willed to show us through the church, so many masterpieces of his grace. We have no fear that the honor and praise which we pay to them, derogates in any manner from that adoration and service which we owe Him. We but faintly imitate the action of God when we sing the praises of his saints, for Divine Truth has said: "If any man minister to me, him will my Father honor." (1) In the saints we honor his most perfect handiwork among men, and all their glory is for his sake. "Praise men of renown * * whose godly deeds have not failed." Invoke the saints continually. Recommend to their holy sympathies your trials and sorrows. Cry out to them in

1 Joan XII, 26.

temptation, make of them your daily companions. Study their lives and ponder their victories over the world and self. There is no real complete Catholic devotion, in a soul that is a stranger to the saints. Such a soul has at least one Protestant characteristic. The saints can never be outdone in generosity, nor have they lost interest in souls by being eternally united with Jesus Christ in glory. Hence every prayer and invocation will bear fruit a hundred fold, for they who are the nearest and dearest servants of the Lord, will pray for us that we may ultimately be associated with them and join in their song of eternal praise.

PURGATORY.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me."—Job XIX, 21.

Beloved! have you sometimes wandered through the silent cities of the dead, listening to the requiem that the wind mournfully chants among the trees and gravestones, giving yourselves up to the solemn thoughts that those places suggest? Yes, we have all made little pilgrimages now and again to those sombre reservations—sombre because no sun with its light and warmth can ever dispel from there the presence of the great leveler—death; that paralyzes the tongue of the orator, that shrivels up the hand of the sculptor, that silences the voice of music and turns all beauty to ghastliness. None but the fool or the most callously indifferent man can contemplate death without being seriously impressed. And were we to look upon it only from the view-point of nature, our souls would be filled with bitterness, but the voice of religion sweetens

the sadness of our meditations. Upon the tombstones in God's acre we see not only the record of death, but with that the prayer which religion's voice teaches, 'may he rest in peace'—*Requiescat in Pace.*'

There is no doctrine of the Catholic church that so sweetly attunes itself to the sentiments of the human heart as that of Purgatory. It answers a yearning cry of the human soul. We find the doctrine set forth by some of the ancients, independently of revelation, which is a strong plea for its reasonableness. Plato (1) speaks of a future existence, whereby suffering man may expiate a guilty life and the Poet Virgil (2) sings of a purification, which must be undergone after death in order that the soul may be fitted to enter the Elysian Fields.

There are two things that are of faith concerning Purgatory, first that it exists, and second, that the souls detained there on account of the guilt of venial sin, or the temporal punishment yet due for mortal sin already forgiven, may be assisted by our

(1) The idea is found in the Gorgias.

(2) Aeneid lib. VI.

pious suffrages. We read in the second book of the Machabees, that Judas sent offerings of silver to Jerusalem, that sacrifices might be offered by the priests, for the souls of those who had fallen in battle, and the inspired word adds that "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." (1) It is true that the portion of Holy Writ from which the text is drawn is not received by our separated brethren as a part of the inspired Scriptures, yet the most learned among them acknowledge the historical genuineness of the books of the Machabees, and from this is sufficiently proven, that the custom of praying for the dead existed in the Jewish church and furthermore, that the custom can only be explained by admitting that under the Old Law the belief in Purgatory existed. For us who belong to the household of the faith, no difficulty touching this matter exists. It was not until the rebellion of Luther, that the above named sacred books were called into question, regarding their inspired character. "And

(1) II Mach. XII, 46.

who was Luther?" says a great preacher of the last century, "a libertine and an apostate monk. Whence did he come? From a monastery where for twenty years he lived on the alms offered for the dead. What had he discovered against the doctrine of Purgatory? Absolutely nothing—he merely denied it." (1) Our Blessed Lord declares that a sin against the Holy Ghost shall be remitted neither in this world or in the next, and these words clearly allow the supposition that some sins may be forgiven in the next world. We know by faith that these cannot be mortal sins which are not pardoned after death, hence the words of the Master refer either to venial sin or to the temporal punishment due to mortal sin already remitted. The great St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, preaching on St. Paul's expression: "Some souls are saved, yet so as by fire," (2) says: "The apostle shows that certain souls will indeed be saved but only after the endurance of the pain of fire, in order that by such punishment they may

1 Agostino da Montefeltro (Purgatory.)

2 Cor. III, 19.

be purged of guilt, and not be tortured by an eternal fire like those who are lost." (1) There can be no reference to the fire of hell, from which we know that no soul is ever snatched. This illustrious Father of the church then preached Purgatory in the fourth century of the Christian era, as clearly as any expounder of God's word could do it today. If we turn to the annals of Christian history, in order to find the practice of praying for the dead, we are abundantly rewarded. From the second century, the early morn of Christianity, we have the beautiful testimony of Turtullian. "On an appointed day every year," says he, "we make our oblations for the departed, and if you enquire for the sanction of this and other religious practices for which mayhap you find no warrant in Scripture, I will tell you that tradition is their source, custom confirms them and faith preserves them." (2) This surely has the ring of true Catholic teaching. What a consolation and a joy to know that our brethren

1 Sermo XX in Ps. CXVIII

2 Turtullian De Corona c 4.

at the very dawn of Christianity were in no wise distinguished from ourselves in this beautiful doctrine and practice. The great St. Augustine, of Hippo, the most illustrious of all the Latin Fathers, declares the custom of praying for the dead, to be universal in the church, as a matter of sacred observance. (1) Some of the most touching evidences of the antiquity of this practice, are found in the inscriptions upon the walls of the catacombs in which such large numbers of the martyrs were buried; "May God refresh thy soul", "Mayest thou, O Ursula, be rendered acceptable to Christ", "May eternal light shine upon thee, O Limothea, in Christ." (2)

The reasonableness of the doctrine of Purgatory, Beloved, is perhaps its most striking characteristic. It is difficult for the mind to understand how the Almighty will treat in precisely the same manner, the individual whose life has been characterized by constant righteousness, and the sinner who has lived but to trample upon divine

1 Serm. 172, N 2.

2 Northcote "The Roman Catacombs, Cap. VIII.

law, but who, by an altogether signal grace, repents efficaciously before death, and thereby earns a title to eternal glory. This offends our natural sense of justice, our idea of proportion and fitness. It is perfectly true that it is not for us to measure the Lord's action by our standards, and He Himself warns us against attempting the analysis of His ways, which are declared inscrutable. However the reason which he has given us, is a reflection of his own, and the normal judgments which flow from our reason, are probably in line with divine truth. The doctrine of Purgatory solves the difficulty. Besides the natural sense of justice, which (if I may dare so speak) demands that there should be some expiation on the part of the forgiven sinner, we have Scriptural warrant for the belief, that such expiation God actually requires. When David sent up his heart-broken "miserere" the Lord was touched, and poured down upon the soul of the guilty king the waters of forgiveness; yet he sent his prophet Nathan to tell the royal sinner, that although his sin had been taken away, yet

the Lord would severely afflict him. A famous Protestant author (1) says: "Many who die are surely too good to go to hell, and assuredly too bad to be admitted at once to paradise." And hence we say that our instincts tell us of the necessity of that middle state of purging and purification.

Purgatory is as we have said a sweetness and a consolation. Its doctrine tells me that the grave is not in any absolute sense capable of separating me from my loved ones. It tells me that I can still show them my love and devotion, and they in turn can help and support me. Though death can never be stripped of all its horrors—for the divine decree stands, that death should always be a punishment--yet to the believer in Purgatory it can never leave that horrible chaotic void that it creates in the soul that has no faith, for this doctrine assures the soul that it can help the beloved departed on toward God, and the consciousness of being able to render such assistance greatly compensates for the pain of separation. Again this belief offers the Christian soul

1 Haase.

opportunity to practice a larger charity than that which is limited by the suffering and the needy here upon earth, a charity which the grave can neither chill nor render inefficacious.

Though very many pious persons are ever mindful of the souls in Purgatory, not only those souls to whom they have been bound by the cords of Adam or the bonds of friendship, but for all who languish there in pain, yet it must be confessed sadly, that numbers of us are deaf to their appeals for help. According to the doctrine of the church, they cannot help themselves, and so depend upon the souls triumphant and the souls militant for assistance. If the appeal of Job which I have used as a text impresses us with the misery of that great servant of God, surely those words carry a message of heartrending pathos to us, when they issue from the prison-house of just souls. "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Their sufferings we are taught are intense, differing from those of the damned only in duration. "Have pity

on me." Mayhap we have been deaf this many a day to the cry of a dead mother, who bore us, nurtured us and loved us with that marvelous tenderness, that is found nowhere but in a mother's heart. She suffers in those cleansing flames, perhaps for sins that we occasioned. "Have pity on me;" it may be the cry of a father, a husband, a wife, a son, or daughter. Marvelous indeed that our hearts have been cold and indifferent to those piercing appeals. "Have pity on me," it may be the cry of a friend or companion, whom we led into the path of sin by our evil example, nay more, we may have been the companion of that guilt which now he expiates." "Have pity on me;" it may be the appeal of some poor forgotten soul, known to but few and regretted by none. "Have pity on me, have pity on me at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me."

Catholics very often are willing to practice extravagance, in efforts to bury their dead with pomp. John Ruskin says: "Many a poor family will nearly ruin themselves, to

testify their respect for some member of it in his coffin, whom they never much cared for when he was out of it." We all know how true this is. But the question suggests itself: Is this display a token of regard for the departed, so much as an exhibition of personal pride and vanity? I think beloved that it is rather the latter, for with a startling frequency it happens, that the sod which shuts in the dead one from earthly view, shuts him out from the memories of those whom he has left behind. The funeral knell not only proclaims that a man is dead but that he is also forgotten. St. Francis de Sales calls praying for the dead the noblest form of almsgiving, for by this act we truly clothe the naked, feed the hungry and dry up the tears of the desolate. If we look at this work of mercy in the light of its effect we are forced to see its spiritual excellence. It is giving souls to God, forcing them (if so I may speak) into heaven, adding citizens to the heavenly kingdom; and for these reasons it becomes obvious, that it is not simply an act of charity towards our neighbor, but an act of charity towards

ourselves. Can you believe that the soul whose liberation you have obtained by prayer, will be oblivious of your kindly offices, now that he shares the joys of Christ? Assuredly not, for the saints in heaven are perfected in charity. And if the prayer of the just man here on earth "availeth much," as the word of God teaches us, how much more the prayer of the soul purified of all earthly dross, basking in the sunshine of God's blessed presence in heaven. Not only when they arrive at the beatific vision, but while in bonds, do they remember their benefactors, and pray for them, for though powerless (as we have seen) to aid themselves they are able to intercede with God for us.

The Church supplies every sort of incentive to the practice of this devotion, and she herself is ever mindful of that portion of her communion, which she calls '*ecclesia patiens*', 'the Church suffering.' She allows us to apply, a very large number of indulgences to the souls in Purgatory, and exhorts us continually to remember those that are in bonds. She sets aside one

special day in the year on which she makes most solemn commemoration of them, and in every mass celebrated upon her altars, she commands the priest to make a special memento for the dead. Though he is allowed to offer a special fruit of the sacrifice, for this or that individual soul, or for some particular intention, he is never allowed to omit the mention of all the suffering souls, that they may receive some benefit from that august sacrifice.

Let us be generous then Beloved, to the suffering souls, never allowing a day to pass without furthering the cause of some one of them by a fervent prayer. We need their help more than they need ours, for although they languish in pain, yet the question of their eternal companionship with God is settled, whereas we are surrounded by a dreadful uncertainty. Let us then by the exercise of charity, prepare for ourselves advocates against the awful hour of death and judgment. And if by God's grace we die Christian deaths, how keenly shall we appreciate the fruit of our former charity, when we shall be tortured by those same

flames in the day of our purification. That fruit will be the assistance, which those blessed ones for whom we prayed, shall extend to us. 'By what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.' (1) Let these words of Christ keep ringing in our ears, and let them spur us on to the practice of a pious selfishness. Finally let us remember not only our own beloved dead, though these indeed have the prior claim upon our help, but let us also be mindful of those poor, forgotten or abandoned souls, who have no one to offer special supplication for them. "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." "May they rest in peace. Amen."

1 Matt. VII, 2.

THE INCARNATION.

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." (1)

The enemies of Christianity have advanced a great variety of arguments to demonstrate, that belief in our Holy Religion is extreme folly. They have attacked us at many points, but their proudest efforts have been directed against the mysteries of our faith. They have maintained that to give an unquestioning assent to a proposition, which is not amenable to analysis and comprehension on the part of the human intellect, is to surrender our intelligence to unreasonable bondage. They have told us that fidelity to reason demands, that man should decline to accept what is beyond his ken. A religious system, therefore, which proposes mysteries for man's belief should be rejected.

These statements are invested with a certain plausibility, which has shipwrecked many weak souls, who have not perceived their thinly veiled sophistry; and it may be

1 Joan I, 14.

said without hesitation, that the contentions of our adversaries concerning mystery in religion are the veriest sophistry that can well be imagined. We live in the very midst of mystery. The man who says that his belief is limited by his powers of comprehension, occupies an utterly untenable position. The distinction between what is above reason and what is against reason, is one which our enemies continually lose sight of. Were an absolutely certain demonstration to be given, which would prove beyond doubt that a mystery of religion was against reason, then indeed would a hard blow be dealt our faith. But the contention that every article of belief which our poor little minds cannot comprehend should be repudiated, is highly absurd. The law of gravitation is mysterious beyond words. Yet who would dare to deny it? I behold phenomena, it is true, which clearly tell me of such a law, but as to the last analysis of the law itself, I know simply nothing. I cannot fathom it, for it is a mystery. As I gaze upwards into the starry vaults of heaven, though I am confronted with phe-

nomena, yet I am face to face with mystery. The process whereby the little acorn becomes the forest giant, holds mysterious secrets from the keenest scientist. Since then we are surrounded by mysteries in this visible, tangible world, what wonder that there should be mysteries in that unseen world, which has filled the earth with its phenomena from the dawn of the world's history until our own days.

The mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, is the foundation of Christianity, and one of the profoundest of mysteries, "unto the Jews a stumbling block," as blessed Paul says "and unto the Gentiles foolishness." (1) So indeed has it proven, but not, as the apostle continues, to those both Jews and Greeks, who are called by "the power of Christ and the wisdom of God." "For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (2) It is indeed a truth that admits of no philosophical demonstration, and by the world it has been grossly miscon-

1 Cor. I, 23.

2 Ibid.

ceived: "The light shineth into darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not." (1) It has not ceased to be 'the light,' however, and it has penetrated the darkest spots of a darksome world, and has become the light of life to countless millions. The Christian soul believes without question or hesitation, that the Son of God—the second person of the Blessed Trinity, came down upon earth, and assuming the rags of human nature, became man—Jesus Christ—one person; God and man at the same time, because in possession of both the divine and human natures. Our Blessed Lord then is he in whom "the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth corporally." (2) "He is God—God in the flesh, God possessing a human dwelling, God not restricted or localized, yet capable of being seen by the eye, and pointed to with the finger." Hence He is what the Holy Scriptures prophesied that He would be, 'Emmanuel', that is, 'God with us.' The Incarnation is the highest development and perfection of God's relations with man.

1 Joan I, 5.
2 Col. II, 9.

Every other manifestation of Himself was a step in the direction of the realization of this mystery. St. Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, says: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son." (1) The Incarnation, therefore, is the last, the greatest and the perfect completion of God's revelations to the world. The cause of this event is set forth succinctly in St. Paul's letters to the Galatians. "When the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (2) The reparation, then, of the shattered spiritual fortunes of the race, was the prompting motive which determined this mystery of divine condescension. And it is the knowledge of this fact that makes the mystery luminous to souls of the faithful, whether learned or

1. Heb. I, 1, 2.
2. Gal. IV, 4, 5.

ignorant. The obscurity which surrounds the hypostatic union of two natures in one person, is lost sight of in the light and splendor of God's wondrous love and generosity. The faithful soul inquires not, as to how God wrought this wonderful thing; she simply rests in the knowledge that He did it for love of us, to redeem us from the captivity of sin, and to restore us to liberty, to bestow on us the adoption of sons. After all it is not too much to say that God speaks to us in our best moments upon the deepest mysteries, in such wise that we can tell no man the nature of the message, nor can we really tell ourselves; but we are conscious of a spiritual refreshment, an exaltation of soul, a profounder adoration than before these divine visitations. Mayhap these precious moments of contemplation upon such marvels as the Incarnation, are times when God allows us to experience some jot or tittle of the reward of an unquestioning faith. And this is true of the lowly and ignorant, as of the wise and learned, for the tidings of this mystery are addressed to all. Have you ever noticed, that when children

are at play, sometimes their little faces look grave and solemn, when they pause awhile from romping, and stand deep wrapt with straining eyes? Some one has spoken of the fathomless depths of a child's eyes under like circumstances. Are we compelled to describe the situation as a moment of complete blank? Would it be amiss to believe that He who loved the little ones with such tenderness, is then speaking to their hearts? And so when we behold some individual of poor gifts and no education buried in the thought of God's goodness as expressed in the Incarnation, are we sure that He is not communicating illumination as well as warmth?

The most dreadful feature of man's condition after the fall of our first parents, was not that he was condemned to death, or that he was rendered amenable to sorrow, pain and misery. Nor was it that he was driven from Eden to struggle amid the thorns and brambles. No, beloved, the most unfortunate feature of it all, was that God withdrew Himself from man. He had walked familiarly with Adam, and had con-

versed with him as a father with his child, but when sin had stolen the hearts of His creatures, He hastily withdrew, and shut Himself in His heavenly home; and a horrible void filled the earth, and cold and darkness o'erspread its face, for its light and warmth had fled. His mercy battled with His justice, before the sentence of His malediction was thundered forth upon man's rebellion, and simultaneously with enumerating the curses which would afflict the race, He promised that He would come again to gather us to Himself. For ages He came, but only now and then to remind us of His promise. To Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to Moses and to Josue did He speak, and then He sent His prophets and teachers, all the while insisting that in the fullness of time He would be true to His promise. Upon this word the Patriarchs leaned; around it centered all the religious hopes and aspirations of the chosen race through their long and troublous history. Though the various nations without the sacred pale lost the knowledge of this promise of God's return, as far as it's definite idea was con-

cerned, yet there was a universal hope of a great emancipation from the woes that afflicted humanity, and of a great uplifting of the race through the kindly ministrations of a God.

What was this save the Messianic idea corroded by error and corruption? The sacred books of the East, the Attic philosophers, and the noblest of Rome's poets, all furnish evidences of the fact that the extravagant expressions of religion, shorn of its pristine purity, were insufficient to obliterate completely the idea of the Incarnation.

And so "in the fullness of time" what man lost in Eden he regained in Bethlehem, for God "sent His Son," His equal in might and majesty * * * "that we might receive the adoption of sons." Did that Son come as we would expect a God to come, beloved? Did He arrive surrounded with every circumstance of pomp; clad in the panoply of His strength? No, beloved, He came to offer sacrifice and He began that sacred oblation at His entrance into this world. He came to teach a gospel

of pain, and His birth was the first object lesson. His coming did not lack glory it is true, for He was born of a virgin, and the darkness of the night was dispelled by a light celestial, and in its midst appeared an angelic host singing with wondrous harmony, a song of peace, the melody of which resounded through heaven's etherial vaults. This heavenly anthem, however, fell only upon the ears of a few shepherds who watched their flocks by night upon a slope of Judaea's hills. The remaining feature which contributed glory to His coming was a marvelous peace, a universal quiet.

"But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began;
The winds with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on
The charmed wave." (1)

"While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course," says Wisdom, "Thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from Thy royal

1 Milton's Hymn on the Nativity.

throne." (1) That universal peace was not, however, a peace that came from the prevalence of concord, charity or godliness; it was the peace of exhaustion. The tide of iniquity was at its fullest; it was in very truth "the fullness of time." The 'taedium vitae' had seized upon a large portion of society, for every avenue to sinful gratification had been thoroughly explored. Man's heart was sick with satiety and his lips were dumb with disgust. The moral fragment of society sat silently waiting. "*Nubes pluant Justum*" Ah! what a moment for that prayer. The mighty waters of iniquity were heaped up; what a moment for that prayer's answer!

This little shivering Babe came to do battle with hell, for the possession of men's souls—He came to grapple with every phase of sinfulness that had crept into the hearts of men. Let us look for a brief moment at the picture that greeted him. "If we except the Jews, all other nations were alike ignorant of the true God and their origin from Him. Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece

1 Wisdom XVIII, 14, 15.

and Rome, were all alike plunged in idolatry and degrading vices; while the Eastern peoples, less skilled in art and letters, had also lost the primary traditions on the works of God and his worship. All these nations were divided by mutual hatred and suspicion, * * * were striving against each other in fierce battle or private deeds of violence, whilst multitudes groaned and dragged on their lives in slavery. Those in power were carnal and selfish, the wise steeped in pride, and split up into sects. * * * Priests were a class of idolators and monstrous imposters. * * * All were born, lived and died with God's anger on their heads—all alike slaves of iniquity." (1) How utterly hopeless seemed the task! The big wicked world on one side and that poor little Babe nestling helplessly in His Mother's arms on the other. But in that little form slumbered the strength of Judah's Lion, and the power of Sion's King. This Babe given to us in the little city of David; this child, whom we knew as a working boy in Nazareth, was the Preacher who

1 Fr. Clark, S. J., Spiritual Life (Incarnation).

aroused Judaea and Galilee; the Master that summoned the world to come after Him, and has made so many faithful to Him unto death. He was the wonder worker who made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk and who called the dead from the tomb. He was the Martyr, who laid down His life that God's justice might be satisfied, and His anger against men appeased. Has He succeeded in that arduous struggle? Has He established a kingdom or an empire of souls, wherein He is truly sovereign? Does He number His subjects in mighty throngs? Yes, beloved, yes, a thousand times to all these questions. The Babe of Bethlehem lives in the minds of an innumerable multitude of men. A large portion of mankind walk in His footsteps, and endeavor with varying success to reproduce His virtues. Though lifted up as a criminal, and degraded before the world upon a throne of ignominy, millions of adorers gather about Him daily, prostrate themselves, and willingly kiss those wounds, "which ope their ruby lips" and send forth regenerating

streams of precious blood. An army of martyrs have sacrificed their lives upon the altar of fidelity to Him. A countless throng of confessors have excluded every thing from their lives, save Him and His kingdom. In very truth He has conquered; He is "every inch a King."

"Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass." (1) Beloved, at this blessed season, it behooves us not only to meditate upon the great mystery of the Incarnation, but to go over to Bethlehem with the shepherds from the hill-side, to see and to adore. Among all the lessons which may be learned while kneeling in silent adoration, in that old shed in Bethlehem, the two most strikingly suggested are one of humility, the other of love. As pride is the greatest of sins, and has caused more misfortune to man than any other vice, the Incarnate God, upon His very entry into the world teaches a striking lesson in humility. Adam desired to be as God, and by that evil yearning, inaugurated the woful history of man's unhappiness.

1 Luke II, 15.

The pride of Cain shed the blood of an innocent brother. The pride of Noe's children drove them to the mad scheme of piercing the heavens with their tower of foolishness; and so it is down through the history of man's perfidy and depravity, his pride has led him to every evil extreme. Jesus Christ could have been born amid riches and splendor; He could have chosen for His mother some personage who inherited empires; but in His birth we find, what would appear a studious avoidance, not only of anything that savors of luxury, but even of what is required for ordinary comfort. We are so used to the picture of Jesus born in the stable, that upon a great many of us it has ceased to make a deep impression. The Latins had a proverb, which might be rendered thus: "Those things to which we are habituated, never strike us as being remarkable." (1) This is true, even though we are accustomed to things, which by their nature, are extraordinary. This is why so few of us learn to any appreciable degree the great lesson of humility, which should be an

1 Assueta vilescunt."

immediate and direct result of "going over to Bethlehem, to see this word which is come to pass." Beloved, how urgently we need that lesson you and I, all of us without exception. Not only are we proud by an unmistakable sin of pride here and there in our lives, but we are so inoculated with the vice, that for the vast majority, it is a personal characteristic.

As to the lesson of love, we have sufficiently rehearsed the fact that love was the motive of the great mystery we are now celebrating. Infinite generosity that we "might receive the adoption of sons." God did not need us, beloved. We might have been left to our own helplessness, after we had become children of wrath through "man's first disobedience and the fall"! Were we all buried in the depths of eternal perdition, the glory and the happiness of God would be absoutely intact. Love then, divine beneficence explain the marvelous condescension of the Son of God.

'Let us go over to Bethlehem' then, and let us beg the divine Babe to make us meek and humble of heart, to inflame our poor

cold hearts with the ardor of His love; that we may love Him above and before all else; that we may manifest our love by the virture of our lives. Let us beg Him too for that love for those about us which He declares is essential for discipleship, that we may be at peace with Him and at peace with all men.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

"Ecce Mater Tua."—Joan XIX, 27.
"Behold Thy Mother."

Ever and anon, my brethren, the omnipotent arm of God is raised to smite the heads of persistent sinners with a visitation of Divine wrath, and as the dread thunderbolt is on the point of descending upon its proposed victims, that arm is drawn down powerless to the side of the Almighty by a creature. A creature! Who is this that stands between a wrathful God and the exercise of His justice, that braves the anger of the Omnipotent? Dearly beloved, it is Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The place of Mary in the Incarnation is one that is unique. Says the learned and holy Bishop Hedley, "Christianity would not be Christianity as we know it, and as our Lord wished it to be, without the presence and the office of His Blessed Mother." There is no portion of Christian teaching that

touches more sympathetically the tenderest chords of the human heart than the doctrine which reveals to us Mary's place in the Church, and there is no teaching which appears more logical to any one having an intelligent grasp of the Incarnation, than the Catholic position relative to the Mother of God.

When the Wise Men of the East, who represented the Gentiles in the stable of Bethlehem, came to adore the Infant Jesus, and offer fitting tribute to the new-born King, "They found the Child with Mary, His Mother." These words of St. Matthew reveal to us succinctly the attitude of the Catholic Church towards the Virgin Mother. Jesus and Mary are inseparable; no disassociation is possible. The great religious revolution of the Sixteenth Century was marked by an effort on the part of frenzied rebels against the Church to break up this companionship, this union between the Redeemer and His Mother. They would, forsooth, love Christ and repudiate Mary. To-day their worthy descendants are reaching the logical conclusion of that ignoble

effort, in the repudiation of Christ Himself as a Divine character.

It has been God's ordinary rule that personal sanctity should be attendant upon high spiritual dignity in place or work. It can not be maintained that this rule has not suffered many exceptions. Even the wicked have been made the instruments of God's glory with a certain frequency. "The angels, however, who as the word imports are God's messengers, are also perfect in holiness." "Without sanctity no one shall see God;" "no defiled thing can enter the courts of heaven; and the higher its inhabitants are advanced in this ministry about the throne, the holier are they. * * * So it is also upon earth; the prophets have ordinarily not only gifts but graces; they are not only inspired to know and teach God's will, but inwardly converted to obey it." (1) Now when we consider the place and the work of Mary, we are struck at the thought of the personal sanctity that must attach to her. The holiest spirit that stands in attendance at the Almighty's dread

1 Newman's Sermons to Mixed Cong. (Glories of Mary.) The title of the work mentioned in footnote is Newman's Sermons to M. Cong.

throne is immeasurably separated from Him when compared with Mary. The prophets were holy because they were God's specially chosen teachers; the Apostles of Jesus Christ were likewise gifted with sanctity, because it was their function to carry to the nations the tidings of salvation through the bloody sacrifice of the Redeemer. The angels are holy, as we have said, because of the service they render at the great white throne; but high above prophet and apostle, high over angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, high above thrones, dominations and powers, stands Mary, God's Mother, peerless in sanctity. This creature God not only loved and blest, adorning her soul with the choicest of His wondrous gifts, but He served her and obeyed her. "Erat subditus illis." "He was subject to them." (1)

She was immune from any stain of human frailty. Such a freedom from even the remote suggestion of sin was not only expedient but necessary in the divine plan for man's redemption; for had she not been free from all stain, from the very first

1 Luke II, 51.

moment of her conception, then would it have been possible for Satan thus to address himself to the Divinity: "Thou wouldst conquer sin! Know, then, that Thy Son, 'ere He become my conqueror, must fall beneath the shadow of my evil influence; for from amongst the children of men, must he take to Himself that body which He will offer upon Calvary's altar to appease Thy mighty wrath, but through man's first disobedience all flesh is mine, and a common heritage of human kind is the stain of iniquity." Hence, in consideration of Mary's exalted position, as the Mother of the Son of God, in consideration of His personal dignity, and the perfection of His victory over sin and death, she was by God's wondrous power conceived Immaculate. Most fittingly, then, does the Church address her in those beautiful words of the Canticle, "Tota pulchra es, macula non est in te." "All fair art thou, in thee there is no stain." (1) The only possible idea of a sinlessness and sanctity superior to the sinlessness and sanctity which we predicate of Mary, is that

1 Cant. IV, 7.

which has exclusive relation to God's personal holiness. When we apply our poor little minds to the contemplation of Mary's position as God's Mother, and the sanctity, the nearness to God, which result from it, we are led to the thought of her glory. Lost, overcome at the thought of the depths of her greatness and glory, and desiring to offer her some little tribute of praise, we find ourselves helpless. "I know not, O Mary, with what praises I may extol thee," cries St. Bernadin, of Sienna.

When the priests and the ancients came nigh to the gates of Bethulia to greet the valiant Judith, returning from that glorious deed of blood, which made her the emancipator of her oppressed people, they greeted her with a nation's grateful praise: "Tu gloria Jerusalem, tu laetitia Israel, tu honorificencia populi nostri." "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people." (1) If these words were fittingly applied to the Israelitish woman for a deed of unquestionable valor, the slaughter of Holofernes,

1 Jud. XV, 9.

how immeasurably more due is their application to Mary, the real glory of Jerusalem, of whom Judith, by Divine providence, was but a type and shadow; Mary, the joy of Israel, who gave to Israel and to the world the source and fountain head of eternal joy, her Son, Jesus Christ. Verily, is she the honor of our people. Yea, the honor of our race, for in her the race is uplifted, and from her spotless womb came forth our salvation. "Blessed art thou, O Daughter, by the Lord the Most High God, above all women upon earth." (1)

When we consider the relationship existing between Mary and Jesus, the Son of God, and the sanctity, greatness and glory consequent upon that relationship, we are bound to conclude Mary's power. That such a creature should be without power with God, a creature who is to such a great extent an object of Divine attention and favor is utterly unreasonable and unintelligible. Mary exercised over Jesus Christ a power of command: "He was subject to them." (2) This power changed the

1 Jud. XIII, 23.
2 Luke II, 51.

Divine plan, as we know from the history of the miracle at Cana in Galilee. It is true that the Savior said in a tone of remonstrance, "My hour is not yet come," but Mary, nothing daunted, simply bade the servants follow His directions, and the result of her mighty intercession was a stupendous miracle. "The limpid water saw its God and blushed." The relations which existed between Jesus and Mary, while they walked the earth, have changed in no essential. Mary is still the mother of the God-Man and Jesus Christ clad in the vesture of His might, and surrounded by the dazzling splendor of His matchless glory, is still the Child of Mary. She has lost nought of her power by being glorified and associated with her Son in the felicity of His celestial kingdom; but rather has that power been augmented and exalted. Mary is not only Christ's Mother, but she is heaven's Queen. How does she use her power? She has a vocation in the Church that brings her power into play.

It was growing dark upon Calvary, and the Redeemer of the world was hanging

upon the gibbet of ignominy, dying amidst the most excruciating agonies of soul and body. His dripping blood was stealing adown the cross, and burying itself in the soil of Golgotha, and in the shadow of that cross stood the Mother of Sorrows, and John the Beloved. They were gazing up intently at the pallid countenance of the expiring Christ, noting with anguish every twitch of the muscles and every groan. In a few moments all would be over. His soul struggled to free itself from His mangled body, and wing its its flight to the Eternal Father, but there must it tarry until the cup of bitterness was drained to the veriest dreg. He had given us all. He had taught His gospel both by word and example. He had left us the means of salvation, and with a sort of abandon He had surrendered Himself to us in the Sacrament of the Altar; He was even now pouring forth His blood in the most awful of tragedies. He had given us all, all save one boon, and now in His dying hour, in order that the measure of His generosity might be absolutely perfect, He gave us His last legacy, the final

testimony of His Infinite love, that being, namely, whom He loved above all others upon earth or in heaven, His Father excepted, Mary, His Virgin Mother. "Son," said He to John the Beloved, "Behold thy Mother!" "Woman, behold thy Son!" (1) And as one of the best founded and most sacred traditions points out, Christ by this act bestowed Mary as a Mother upon the whole human family. Every act of Jesus Christ during His earthly career had for its motive the salvation of men's souls, for this was the reason of His coming. Hence, we conclude that the motive underlying the bestowal of His Mother upon the race, was that man's salvation should be facilitated by her intercession. Another legitimate conclusion is that Mary is our Mother in a most practical sense, and possesses in our regard all those sentiments which fill a mother's heart towards her children. Mary, therefore, loves me and is solicitous in my regard. I know that her will is in perfect conformity with the will of her Divine Son, and, therefore, that she desires most ardently

1 Joan XIX, 26, 27.

what that Son desires, and we know by faith that the chief longing of the heart of Christ is that his Father may be glorified by the salvation of men. Mary, then, is most active in our regard, and her chief solicitude is in the direction of that, for the achievement of which Jesus Christ gave His blessed life, namely,—our eternal welfare. Her solicitude in our behalf is expressed in her numerous supplications for us. We may fancy her prostrate at the throne of her glorified Son, imploring for us all, sinners and saints alike, everything that the tenderness of a Mother's heart suggests. She is not simply the mother of those who keep the law, and are fervent in the service of her Son, nay, she is the Mother of the wicked also, and hence is it that the Church applies to her the appellation of Refuge of Sinners, "Refugium peccatorum." As the act of redemption comprehends in its scope all men, so in like manner does the Motherhood of Mary. Not only, then, for the fervent and the pious does Mary beseech grace, but with an earnestness indescribable she prays for her wayward children. This, then, is

Mary's vocation in the Church; such the exercise of her wondrous power. She is our guide. As a mother leads her little one by the hand, so will Mary lead us through our pilgrimage, if we seek her guidance. When filled with the consciousness of our weakness and incapability, what an abundance of consolation is found in knowing Mary's love, Mary's solicitude, Mary's power.

The place of Mary in the Church establishing, as it does, this relationship between God's Mother and us, clearly involves a definite attitude on our part toward her. Surely there should be found in our hearts sentiments of honor, love and confidence. Honor, who will dare to refuse honor to that creature whom God has so singularly sought out and so lavishly honored? Who will reproach me for my effort (feeble though it be) to imitate the action of my God in venerating her, to whom He made Himself subject? The attitude of Protestantism toward Mary is a most palpable insult to Jesus Christ Himself. What shall I say of the love for Mary, which should abide in my

heart? How tenderly, how yearningly should I love that purest, most blessed of creatures who, by a mystery of Divine Providence has given me my Savior! How much, indeed, for His sake should I love her, and particularly since in His wondrous charity He has given her to me as a Mother, thus further establishing her title to my heart's love. In this love must be found that element of confidence which brings about a sense of secure dependence upon Mary, which prompts us to seek her out, to tell her the story of our woes and mishaps, and look up into her radiant countenance with an appeal for help. Yes, it is a love which tells us that our supplications are never in vain, provided only we are sincere. We feel most intimately that she is our help when we walk in the narrow path of Christian duty, and that she is our refuge when we have fallen by life's wayside, conquered by sin.

She is our life, our sweetness and our hope! Unfortunately, there has appeared among us a sort of tendency to apologize to our Protestant brethren for Mary's exalted

position in the Church, an effort to minimize in some fashion her vocation in the matter of man's redemption. Nothing but a lack of Catholic sentiment, and an ignorance of Catholic theology, could be the efficient causes of such a tendency. And yet there are those who fancy that to bring souls to the knowledge of the truth, such compromising methods are expedient. Let us not separate the Child from Mary, Its Mother. Let us love her with an unreserved love, never fearing that our love for her will in any manner lessen the love we owe to Jesus, her Son and our Redeemer.

Let us make her the repository of all our anxieties, hopes and fears. Let us supplicate her, that through her wondrous intercession we may walk in the way of life, and if, perchance, our lives have been estranged from God and His law, O, then let us fly to her for refuge, stretching out hands of helplessness to the Tower of Strength and Fortitude, begging her to come to our assistance, that she may support our tottering limbs through life, and may be to us at the close of our pilgrimage what the Church so beautifully calls her, the "Gate of Heaven."

CONSOLATRIX AFFLICTORUM.

Dearly Beloved, this world has been well named a battle-field and every life a contest, for there are no features more prominent in the vast majority of human lives than struggle, pain and suffering. What is more thoroughly known than anguish, wretchedness of soul and heart-break, distress at the sufferings and mishaps of those about us, or those connected with us by the cords of Adam, or the ties of friendship; sickness, the pinch of poverty and cold, injustice and fraud? Even where these all are apparently absent, and where there seems to reign peace and contentment, the happiness is only seeming, for there is present the consciousness that the joy will shortly end, nay more, that it may turn to bitterness. Every human joy lacks the guarantee of permanency, every human love is exposed to the danger of inconstancy. The poor man's life is a desperate struggle to keep a little home, to fill hungry little mouths, and

to cover little bodies. When these young people grow up, it is for the most part only to face the uphill road of life, and to prepare to carry on in their turn the same old struggle. The rich man secures himself, mayhap, against the misfortunes which constantly harass his poor brother, and hold the rod over him, but when the conviction is reached, that gold does not bring peace, and when in the silence of his couch at dead of night, the despised conscience rises up accusingly before his mind's eye, then, indeed, the soul of the rich man is filled with bitterness.

The struggle against suffering and wretchedness is universal and fierce but unsuccessful. Here and there it may appear triumphant, but the victory is of a most ephemeral character, and the struggle itself an agony. The law of suffering is universal. It is as much of an inheritance as original sin, of which it is the direct consequence. It is preposterous to suppose that we can eliminate it from life, hence it is madness to make the attempt. It is true that diligent effort can modify it in many

cases, and render its keen edge dull to some degree, but this in no wise disposes of the general truth, that it is universal and unavoidable.

What should be the Christian's attitude toward suffering? Before answering this query it is expedient to observe that we should by God's law utilize any legitimate means for the abatement or elimination of those sufferings, which injure our beings and render us incapable of performing our duties in life, but as regards those sufferings which are unavoidable, we would say in answer to the question proposed above, that the Christian attitude toward these is one of patience and resignation. It is so easy to state this, but so difficult, alas, to reduce it to practice. It so often happens that one is the innocent victim of another's evil deeds, and when trial after trial wears out the poor guiltless heart that never, perhaps, did aught to injure another, nay, on the contrary, frequently sought out means, mayhap, to alleviate others' woes, that heart, I say, by a mighty impulse of nature cries out in rebellion against this seeming injus

tice of God, unless happily it be restrained by the power of His grace. And when suffering is not so undeserved, when the victim can trace its causes to his own sins; by reason of the ravages which those very sins have wrought on his moral nature, it is more difficult to bring into play patience and resignation. Left to ourselves we could never accomplish the task. The influences on the side of our nature are far too strong; but our holy Mother, the Church, comes to the rescue. She proposes and emphasizes the example of Jesus Christ and lays open to us the marvelous helps to be easily obtained at His hands. She further insists that in Him, above and before all else, we should seek our consolation and strength amid the trials of life, but knowing the enormous sympathetic value of proposing to us as a model a suffering creature, who could be model at once and consoler, she hails God's blessed Mother as "Consolatrix afflictorum." "Consoler of the afflicted." She bids us look upon her as an exemplar, and in the midst of our tears and groans to cry out to her for assistance.

There is no title bestowed by the Church upon the Virgin Mother which so tenderly touches the hearts of Catholics as that of "Mater Dolorosa." When Mary carried her precious Babe into the temple to fulfill the Mosaic law of presentation, an old prophet of Israel, speaking to this embarrassed little maid and mother, assured her that a sword of sorrow should pierce her soul. With what harrowing precision is that prophecy fulfilled! What a torrent of anguish engulfed that sweet, pure life with the awful prospect of Golgotha's bloody tragedy constantly before her. How it robbed of perfect joy every kiss she imprinted upon His little face, every embrace with which she folded Him to her loving heart; what an impenetrable gloom it cast upon her domestic life. True, she considered herself the most honored and in a sense the happiest of Israel's daughters, and with great reason, but the wondrous privilege of divine maternity was dearly purchased, for it was to render her the most afflicted of creatures. If she rejoiced at finding Him in the temple, after the weary

and anxious search of several days, that joy was alloyed by the consciousness that she would lose Him again amid circumstances too ghastly for description. Though she rejoiced that He went about working miracles, making the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to walk and even the dead to shake off corruption and come forth from the grave in the freshness of new life; though it gladdened her heart that crowds followed Him and acclaimed Him a great Prophet, yet, she knew that many who had been blessed by His merciful ministrations would forget Him, and it was hers to hear the same voices that had praised Him in Hosannas, clamor for His blood. Who shall sound the depths of her sorrow as she stood in the gloom upon Calvary's summit, listening to the drip, drip of her Child's precious blood as it splashed at her feet and buried itself in the soil of the mountain? How keenly every blow that was dealt upon Jesus fell upon the shoulders of the Immaculate! How every thorn that pierced His divine brow racked her aching brain! How every pain and degradation of the Incarnate

God was echoed and reflected in her pure heart! Is it a matter of marvel that the Church addresses her as "Queen of Martyrs?" Truly, may it be said that she died with Jesus before she was called upon to pay nature's debt by her own physical death.

"At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother, weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last;
Through her heart—His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish bearing,
Lo! the piercing sword has passed."

The saints tell us that no love of God is ever intense without suffering, and so that creature who loved God most intensely had to suffer most. There is more agony implied in her presence on Calvary's summit than can be uttered by human tongue, and the pen even of a Bernard scribbles when describing the anguish of God's Mother on that dread occasion; yet this was but the culmination, the zenith of sufferings that were incipient when she began the fulfillment of her sublime vocation. Mater Dolorosa! How fitting the title! How powerfully her example arraigns the self-indul-

gent, the cowardly, the rebellious, the unresigned! How eloquently does her silent suffering preach the Cross of Christ!

The merit of Mary's anguish was in her obedience, self-surrender and flawless resignation. Because of these the Church sets her before us as a model of uncomplaining suffering. Not only, however, because she is for us a model, but also because of a wondrous sympathy in the heart of Mary in our regard—a sympathy which finds expression in helping us to bear our burdens bravely, or in lightening them when they are too heavy for our poor sustaining powers. We know by faith that an infinite yearning for sinners fills the heart of Christ, and by consequence we know that after the love of her God, Mary's longing affection for us is the predominant sentiment of her soul; for she, the most perfect of creatures, loved what Jesus loved, and desired what He desired. This sympathetic love in Mary for us touches us more nearly, and impresses itself upon us more strongly, by virtue of the fact of her own personal sorrows and sufferings. I know that Mary not only knows my trials

and pains, but that she feels for me. If my history has had dark places, so, indeed, has her's. If my nerves have throbbed with pain, so, indeed, have her's. If my poor heart has been torn with grief, so, indeed, has her's. If I have had to face the uphill road of life, and to struggle against most discouraging opposition, so, indeed, has she. Though the shadow of sin never exerted its baneful influence upon her all pure spirit, yet all the repugnances and the miseries of the human heart save those which come only as the direct results of personal guilt, were by her both known and felt. This it is which makes her appeal so strikingly to us the "Consoler of the afflicted." How many a rebellious spirit has been soothed into submission by a prayer to this Mother of Consolation! How many a poor, broken heart, about to sink beneath the burden of misery and sin, has been buoyed up by crying out to her with a dying voice! Who will count the bereaved ones whose hearts had turned to lead, that have efficaciously looked up to Mary and found solace? What marvels of patience,

resignation and fortitude have resulted from the contemplation of Mary in her mighty heart-bursting sorrow at the foot of the cross, upon which hung the mangled body of her Beloved One, dying a victim of human frenzy?

Beloved, in the light of all that I have said, we begin to understand in some measure the strange words to which the saints have given utterance about the sweetness of pain and the delight of suffering, for, with the example and help of Mary it is easy to apprehend the spiritual value of pain, patiently endured for Christ's sake. Our spiritual vision expands and is strengthened, so that gradually we become able to penetrate the mists which usually obscure it, and to perceive that the sufferings of this little pilgrimage, short at its greatest length, are trivial, indeed. We live in an age when luxuries are demanded on every side; when some of the best efforts put forth by human endeavor have for their motive the diminution, (since the total elimination is confessedly impossible), of pain and inconvenience. So powerful and widespread is the idea of comfort, and in some sense

luxury, that even children of the kingdom fall in great numbers under its influence, and so we endeavor to serve God with as little mortification or inconvenience as possible. Our Blessed Lord has assured us that none can be His disciples without tasting of the cross, and, therefore, we conclude that the sort of service of which we have just spoken, obscures the true idea of discipleship. Wherever the truest expression of that discipleship appears, the cross is one of its leading characteristics, and in Mary, the disciple, par excellence, the cross is overwhelmingly in evidence. Let us hold Mary very dear under the title which I have used as a text, and when the gloom thickens, and when pain and anguish, sadness and desolation and heartburnings settle down upon us, when we fall victims to others' misrepresentations, slanders and injustices, let the cry of our hearts be: Consoler of the afflicted, pray for me! O thou who knowest suffering so well, thou who art my Mother, and who dost yearn for me, help me, support me, chasten my proud spirit with patience and resignation. Mother of sorrows, pray for me.

"Tota pulchra es Maria, et macula orig inalis non est in te." (Antiph. ex Laud Off. Im. Con.)

The addition of new and vain doctrines tc the deposit of faith, once delivered by our Blessed Savior to the Apostles, is, perhaps, the chief contention of Protestantism against the Catholic Church. These so-called accretions are regarded by our separated brethren as corruptions, which constituted sufficient ground for the religious rebellion of the sixteenth century commonly called the "Reformation."

You will recall, beloved, from the pages of the catechism, that one of those notes which distinguish the Catholic Church from all others claiming the Christian title, is that she is Apostolic. That is, she has always taught, and will continue till time's end to teach, only the doctrines which the Apostles taught, and which they in turn received directly and immediately from Jesus

Christ. The Church, therefore, can teach no new doctrine, as there is no new revelation. The doctrines which Christ revealed, however, were not such as to be seen in all their fullness at once. As time sped onward in its course, the disciples of Christ began to study and reflect more and more upon the beliefs of Christianity, and as a natural result, there arose from time to time, discussions and disputes as to whether this or that belief was really contained in the original revelation of Christ. At these junctures, the teaching body of the Church, endowed by Christ Himself with the plenitude of authority, took the disputed matter under consideration, and finally, under the protection of God's Holy Spirit, promised by Christ to the Church, pronounced upon the question finally, and settled the matter forever. The existence of such a tribunal, pronouncing authoritatively upon such issues, is a logical necessity in the Church, in order that the faithful be not tossed "to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine."(1) Let me make the matter more

1 Eph. IV, 13, 14.

clear to you by a few facts from the history of the Church. About three hundred years after the death of Christ, there was much disputing amongst Christians as to whether Jesus was in very truth God like the Father. A certain Churchman had denied Our Blessed Lord's divinity, and had declared that Christ was the Son of God only in an adoptive or restricted sense; that He was not begotten of the Father before all ages. And when the bosom of the Church had been torn by the controversy, which the contentions of this great heresiarch had occasioned, the fathers in Israel, the bishops of the Church, came together under the Presidency of the Pope's representatives, and promulgated, or defined, as we say, the dogma of Christ's divinity. They solemnly declared that it was of faith to acknowledge Jesus as God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God. One hundred years after this solemn assembly, which convened in the year of our Lord 325, and was called the Council of Nice, there arose in the Church a mighty strife, concerning the divine maternity of Our Blessed Lady. Some

maintained that since she was but a creature, and since it was but the human portion of Christ that came forth from her, she, therefore, could not be the Mother of God, but was simply the Mother of God's human nature. Again the teaching authority was called upon to declare to the faithful throughout the world the revealed truth concerning the matter in dispute. The solemn and universal Council of Ephesus, which convened in the year 431, declared that as Jesus Christ was One Person, the God-Man, and as Mary had given birth to that One Person, she was in very truth Mother of God, and furthermore, the Sacred Synod decreed that those who would hold to the unity of Christ's Church, must accept and believe this solemn definition. And so I might conduct you down through the centuries of the Christian era, showing you the same phenomenon from time to time until the present age. Every truth which the Church has defined was, therefore, contained in the deposit of faith, which fell from the lips of our Blessed Lord, and there can be nothing novel in the Church's teachings concerning faith. Chris-

tianity was not meant to be a lifeless, stagnant thing from the beginning; for, it was to go through a process of unfolding, of manifesting to every succceeding age wondrous treasures which it had from the beginning, but which were not always flashed forth with the same brilliancy upon the eyes of beholders. We know that the bud contains the petals, which will shortly show themselves beneath the sun's warm rays, a vision of loveliness and a treasure house of perfume, but it is only by gradual development that the rose reaches this full perfection. We know, too, that the mighty giant of the forest is contained in the little acorn that lies so humbly in our path, yet it is only by slow developments that it begins to take on its majestic bearing.

Let us now come to the consideration of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. But first let me ask, what does the Church really mean by this doctrine? You know, beloved, that as a consequence of Adam's fall we are all conceived and born in sin. Our first parent held our spiritual fortunes in the hollow of his hand, and faith-

less to God, to himself and to us, he fell, and by Divine decree we, as his unhappy children, fell with him. We come into the world children of wrath, bearing the taint of the original transgression. Now the Catholic Church teaches that Mary, by virtue of her great vocation as Mother of Jesus Christ, was in the very first instant of her conception rendered Immaculate, that is, free from every stain of original sin. This blessed truth was proclaimed and defined by Pius IX of illustrious memory, surrounded by the Bishops whom he had gathered from every portion of the globe, in order to take counsel of them, before announcing to the entire world this sacred dogma of our faith. What has been already said will make clear to you what that proclamation meant, namely, that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is contained in the original deposit of faith given by Christ to His Apostles.

There is nothing novel in the idea of Mary's Immaculateness. We find expressions in the writings of the ancient Fathers of the Church which clearly tell us their

mind upon the matter. Origen, who dates from the second century of our era, exclaims that "Mary was not like Eve, deceived by the Devil, nor was she infected with any of his venum." (1) By another she is called, "Purer than the angels," purer, mind you, than those blessed spirits who have never known original guilt. St. Ephrem, in the fourth century, says: "As in Thee, O Lord, there is no sin, so no stain blights Thy pure Mother's soul." (2) When St. Augustine, of the same period, treats of the general fall of the race through Adam, he declares that he wishes to exclude from his discussion the sacred Virgin, who was the Mother of the Word Incarnate, "For," says he, "the honor of God demands that her name be not mentioned where there is question of sin." (3)

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception impresses itself upon the Catholic mind, especially, by its fitness. We read in the ninth chapter of the book of Proverbs these words: "Wisdom hath built herself a house."

1 Orig. Hom. I.
2 Ephrem. (In Carminibus Nisit.)
3 Aug. (de Nat. et Gratia., C. 36.)

The Doctors who have offered an explation of these words agree, that the house spoken of is the Blessed Virgin Mary. Wisdom designates the Uncreated Wisdom, that is, God Himself. Now there is mention of an altogether special and particular work which Divine Wisdom performs. There is not a reference to those multitudinous works which He performs without spending special thoughts upon them, (if I may dare so speak): "He spake and they were made." Not only is there question of Wisdom building a special house, but there is indication of a special purpose, for the text says: "Wisdom hath built *herself* a house." Hence it is a tabernacle wherein the God-head shall rest. Can you imagine that the Almighty would build up this resting place for His Divinity, and then allow it to be polluted by the vile breath of sin—allow it to become the dwelling house of devils, before it came into the possession of its rightful Owner? Can you believe that Mary's womb could ever become the fitting habitation of an All-pure God, if by original sin it had once been the possession of that

arch-adversary of man's salvation whom Jesus came to conquer and to dispossess? Beloved, the Savior's victory over sin would be but partial if he could find only a habitation that had been once under the baneful influence of iniquity. It is repugnant to the Catholic mind that the first and most precious ciborium that ever held the Incarnate Word of God should ever have been, even for the most infinitesimal portion of a moment, under the dominion of Satan. "Hail, full of grace!" said the angel to Mary, full of that quality which makes the creature likest God, full of that influence which is the very negation of sin. It is difficult to understand how anyone having even a rudimentary notion of the demands of God's honor could attribute the slightest sinfulness to that being, who was the Spouse of the Holy Ghost and the Mother of the Son of God. Her wondrous dignity involving, as it does, such intimacy with the Triune God, makes it imperative that she be conceived without sin. How fittingly, then, does the Spouse of Christ address her

in those words of the Canticle: "Thou art all fair, in thee there is no stain." (1)

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception is something which the Catholic heart receives with joy. That heart will never believe that the Church could predicate excessive purity of the Mother of God. For centuries before the definition of this dogma, its feast was celebrated with solemnity throughout the Church, and the touching devotion of the faithful to Mary, under the title of the Immaculate, was always a universal evidence of how Catholic instinct welcomed the doctrine.

Mary was redeemed, it is true, yet not as one of us. She was not rescued from sin after it had blown its tainted breath upon her, but she was preserved by the hand of God from its approach. She is not as one who is rescued from the surging billows after shipwreck, but rather as one who is conducted safely into port, before the break of the storm, or before its sullen roar is heard. The purity and serenity of her life were the logical continuation of her immaculate be-

1 Cant. of Cant. IV, 7.

ginning. . Passions never strove for ascendency in her bosom; good and evil never struggled in that heart, and amid all her sorrow and anguish the peace of her soul was never jarred. "Her spirit," says a famous preacher, "came into existence serene and peaceful as a ship glides in the morning light from a safe harbor into a tranquil sea, with a glow upon her sails from the sun which shall never set in all her happy voyage." "Mary is to walk through a world of mire immaculate, no stain on her purity, no dross on her charity, no obstacle to her love of God.' (1) Her's, indeed, was the path of the righteous, "which as the shining light goeth forward and increaseth even to the perfect day." As a drop of poison can render worthless a draught of the purest water, so the slightest influence of sin would have rendered Mary unfit for the great work of her vocation. How marvelously close was she to the source of all goodness and purity. He was blood of her blood, bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, having her very lineaments

1. Bishop Hedley, O. S. B., "The Virgin Mother."

and expression. "It is surely no matter of marvel," says Newman, "that she left behind her in the Church an ordor like cinnamon and balm, and sweetness like to choice myrrh."

The Church fearlessly and confidingly bows down to this wonderful woman. She calls her the Mother of Mercy, the Seat of Wisdom, the Help of Christians, and the Refuge of Sinners, the Inviolate, the Most Chaste, the Most Pure, and in all this she but faintly imitates the Almighty, who not only showered upon her the riches of His grace, but He Himself became subject to her. "He was subject to them." (1) She reflects the royalty of God, whose masterpiece she is. It is with great fitness in this age troublous with avarice, selfishness, lust and indifference to God and eternity, an age in which the babble of mammon obscures, nay, well nigh smothers, the voice of the Church, that a great Pontiff, upon the watch-tower of Israel, should cry out with a voice of thunder, which reverberates to the

1 Luc. II, 51.

uttermost bounds of the earth, calling Christ's servants to the veneration of Mary Immaculate. (1) The Church has always called upon Mary in every great crisis, knowing full well her vocation in the Church and realizing her power. She is called the exterminator of heresies in the sacred liturgy. And so, at the present time, while celebrating the golden jubilee of the definition of her sinless conception, we are called upon to supplicate her, not only to check the progress of error in an irreligious age, but as the Immaculate Virgin, to stem by her power the tide of sensuality and lust that threatens to engulf society. An illustrious convert of the last century once said in a sermon on the "Glories of Mary," that, "it was a boast of the Catholic Church that it had the gift of making the young heart chaste; and why is this, but that it gives us Jesus Christ for our food, and Mary for our nursing mother." (2) Vindicate the claim of the Church, beloved, by fulfilling this boast in your own lives. Alas, how much we need the protection and the help of Mary

1 Jubilee of Im. Con., 1904.
2 Newman, "Glories of Mary."

in the matter of preserving that virtue which her Immaculate Conception suggests. During these latter days even the public sense of decency is not easily offended, so lax has become the idea of social morality. Time was when it was demanded by public sentiment, at least, to conceal vice, but now there is an unmistakable shamelessness shown in pandering openly to the nastiest instincts of the human heart. This, of course, is not true in those rural districts where the vices of the cities have not penetrated. But in the larger communities it is most palpable. So sensuous has the theatre become, that unless a production has some suggestive feature, it rarely succeeds. The theatrical advertisements which make the streets hideous, clearly indicate a morbid public taste. A large portion of current literature is suffused with corruption. We laugh at and repeat jokes which our fathers and mothers would have regarded as extremely objectionable, not because they were narrow, but because they had a finer moral sense than we. Worse than all this, we have in large measure lost the Catholic

conviction that sensuality is a grave iniquity. The spirit of the age has so dominated many of us that we look upon it as a pardonable weakness. Surrounded, then, as we are with temptation, met at every turn with occasions and incentives to sin, it is, indeed, expedient that we take refuge in Mary Immaculate. Let us pray to her with fervor, and a lively consciousness of our danger, to shield and protect us from the snares that are laid for us, and from the promptings of our own rebellious nature. Let us for the better securing of our virtue resolve on the daily practice of some little devotion to her Immaculate Conception. We can make a contract with Mary, so to speak, whereby we may obtain her special help, for the offering of some special little honor to her. If, perhaps, we have been unfortunate enough to have fallen victims to sin, nay, more, if we have been enthralled in habits of sin, let us not despair, for Mary is not only the protectress of our virtue, but she is our refuge and our hope if, unhappily, we have lost it. Let us ask her assistance to rise from the slavery of bad habits, be-

seeching her to stretch out to us her maternal arms, to hold us up in our helplessness, and even when purified by penance and restored to God's grace, let us bid her remember our former weaknesses, and to lead us about as a mother leadeth her little one by the hand.

"Hail, Queen of the Heavens!
Hail, Mistress of Earth!
Hail, Virgin most pure,
Of immaculate birth!
Clear Star of the morning,
In beauty enshrined!
O Lady, make speed
To the help of mankind."

WORLDLINESS IN RELIGION.

"You cannot serve God and mammon." (1)

Beloved: It does not require any profound study of the New Testament to see most clearly that the religion of Jesus Christ is pre-eminently a religion of the cross, and that the standards which He set up are the perfect antitheses of those of the world. We hear a good deal at the present time about a certain reconciliation of the Church with the world or with the age. The idea is founded upon a mistaken notion of Christianity, a distortion of the character and the teaching of Christ, and no theorizing, no clever subterfuge will ever effect concord between the two irreconcilables. Look at society round about us, and you cannot fail to observe that one of its most distinguishing characteristics is indifference to the things of God and eternity. The advocates of liberalism in religion, of free-thought and so-called rationalism, are received into pre-

1 Luke XVI, 13.

sumptively Christian society's midst, with as much grace as is accorded the truly Christian man. It may be added that on account of their sophistries, these individuals are especially interesting to society's denizens, if their financial resources will sustain them socially. Going to church, at least on occasion, is, perhaps, a kind of necessity for the maintenance of social respectability, but even where this is in some way required, we find the supremest indifference to dogma and an unmistakable indifference to that high code of morality which is an essential feature of Christianity. In the whirl of progress and change, Catholicity, immutable and unyielding, appears to the lukewarm or worldly disciple as quaint and trite. It seems to fall behind in the great onward march, in which everything is bubbling over with progressive energy. It lacks flexibility; it does not accommodate itself to modern ways of thinking and appreciating things. This view is productive of an effort on the part of those holding it to effect a sort of congruity between the demands of religion and those of society,

and in consequence they suffer shipwreck on the rock against which Christ warned us in the words of my text, "You cannot serve God and mammon." The expression of loyalty to Christ and the Church is, through lack of moral courage, confined to convenient times and places. Many are willing to serve Christ and listen obediently to the Church, when their devotedness does not interfere with temporal advancement, or is not subjected to cruel criticism or satire. The possibility of gaining socially, by the sacrifice of a religious point, or a precept of the Church, carries with it so much fascination, that its conquest of poor weak souls is incalculable. They do not openly declare themselves anti-Catholic, but glide easily into a position of absolute inconsistency.

There is another phase of this worldliness in religion which is directly and positively hostile to most sacred doctrines, traditions and practices of Catholicity. It manifests itself in efforts on the part of deluded Catholics to obscure those points which sharply distinguish Catholicity from Protestantism, to set up a system of contemptible and cow-

ardly apologetics for the Church, as though the fair Spouse of Christ could ever need to apologize to heresy and corruption. The guilty ones who are thus disloyal to their Holy Mother, are rendered uncomfortable by any reference to indulgences, the doctrine concerning the actual power of the priesthood to remit sin, the use of sacramentals, the veneration of relics and images and prayers to the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. There is often an attempt to minimize these sacred beliefs and practices. I have even known a distinguished Catholic to say, regretfully, that there was too much attention devoted to the Mother of God and the Saints. This can only be regarded as a sort of apostasy. It would be a mistake to suppose that worldliness in a Catholic injured his faith only and not his morals. The moral code of the world is extremely easy. It takes into sympathetic account all our carnal instincts and really offers few incentives for self-control save those which are necessary to preserve external or public decency. The Catholic worldling will easily see where the Church is too rigorous, where

she expects more than human nature can offer, and if he does not explicitly repudiate her moral code he will at least settle himself cozily in the conviction, that his offenses are rather expressions of pardonable weakness than of malice.

Another phase of worldliness in religion appears in identifying religious practice with social distinctions. It is by no means an unheard-of thing that certain Catholics, considering themselves socially better than the majority of people, will not go to assist at mass in a church or chapel where God's lowly and poor gather about the altar. These of "the better class" (to use an accepted expression) can only worship God in a "fashionable church." This is a dreadful commentary on their personal religion, in view of the fact that Jesus Christ went about as a "tramp" and a "beggar," and picked out twelve men from the lowest strata of society, and with them upset the existing order and renewed the face of the earth. Apart from the fact that social pretentions, in a country like this, are for the most part an intolerable foolishness and

arrogance, worthy of no serious attention or thought, it must be clear to every reader of the New Testament narrative, that to inject them into the matter of one's personal relations with God is to render religion a mockery. There exist social distinctions, beyond doubt, and they will continue to exist so long as society holds to its present organization. Their existence, furthermore, is perfectly normal, and social science demonstrates their necessity, but in the presence of Jesus Christ and in the matter of His service they dwindle away into nothingness. The Church has uniformly despised them. It is true that she demands that her ministers proceed from decent families, but the decency which she insists upon is that which comes from the observance of God's law and not from social prominence. Hence, the son of a swine-herd has sat upon the chair of Peter, and the priesthood is recruited generally from the lower classes. Though our Savior came of royal blood, and had in his possession, therefore, the first title to social distinction, His whole career was one of self-effacement. Not only by His marvelous

example, but by most emphatic teaching, did He insist upon humility in His followers. Finally, if we look for Christliness among the faithful we find it with far greater frequency among the poor and lowly, than among the rich and socially distinguished. It is perfectly true, that among those of prominence and plenty, we find souls who faithfully observe the precepts of Christian life, and who by their unselfishness become sources of edification in the Church. These, however, are not in the same category with those misguided souls who decline to kneel by the beggar's side, or who refuse to worship God save in becoming surroundings.

Beloved, it behooves us to inspect the causes of this worldliness which we have rehearsed in some of its aspects. The cause which is probably the most potent is a lack of proper religious education. The human soul is never so impressionable as in childhood, and its aptitude to the reception of religious ideas is nothing short of marvelous, but if, unfortunately, the precious years of childhood roll by unattended by the proper religious training of the tender soul, its

energies will be absorbed by other ideas of a pernicious character which will engross the young mind. The child may grow to all appearances a child of the Church, but when beginning to think for himself at the dawn of youth, nay, when master of his action at the dawn of manhood, religion will be a subject of small anxiety, since its principles were never radicated in the soul. Such a one has no deep, earnest religious convictions, and as a consequence is not thoroughly persuaded as to the necessity of holding fast to every jot and tittle of the faith, and as religious truth is the sanction *par excellence* of moral law, when this truth is held only after a half-hearted or indifferent manner, the aforesaid law will not be scrupulously observed. The soul, then, in such a poverty-stricken condition as a result of inadequate training, is poorly equipped to withstand the ever active and ever alluring spirit of the world. The individual who is possessed of strong Catholic convictions and who, besides being firmly rooted in the faith, breathes continually a Catholic atmosphere, has to battle strenuously and without

ceasing to maintain himself against the world. What wonder, then, that worldliness should dominate in some measure his less fortunate brother, and even inject itself into his religious life. The importance of thoroughly Catholic training can never be sufficiently insisted upon. This training in its fullest and best sense means an education in which the intellectual and religious features are not divorced one from the other, but rather go hand in hand, so that the natural unity of education is preserved. Unhappily, even in the Church there have sprung up recently doctrinaires who have ingeniously suggested schemes of education whereby this natural unity would be disrupted. Among these persons were found some of unquestionable integrity and purity of motive, but (as a costly experience has proven) undoubtedly misguided. These schemes had an apparently economic value, which was more than counterpoised by a danger to souls.

Another cause of the worldliness which we are now considering is a spirit of independence which expresses itself in

insubordination to the authority of the Church. This spirit, mayhap, takes its rise from the exaggerated notion of liberty which fills the minds of so many around us. This independence betrays a lack of that sort of faith which creates in its possessor a correct estimate of the worth of membership in the Church, which makes us humbly and gladly obedient to the voice of our Mother, as heard in her precepts and counsels, and which stirs an ardor, even in the blood of age, in her defence. We hear from time to time protests against the amount of power invested in the hierarchy of the Church, and criticisms of its so-called abuse. "As the Father sent Me," says Christ, "So I send you." (1) And how, Beloved, did the Father send His Christ? Hearken to the answer as it fell from the lips of Christ: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." (2) Curiously enough, these souls who rebel against the seeming tyranny of the Church, submit themselves unreservedly to the tyranny of society, which exercises a

1 Joan XX, 21.

2 Matt. XXVIII, 18.

species of despotism over its members. One's individuality is by degrees modified, and as a consequence, distinctive personality vanishes before the march of the foibles of society. The duties of religion ofttimes conflict with what society demands, and the weak Catholic becomes restive under the law of the Church, which he looks upon as oppressive, and he straightway ignores it. The spirit of rebellion, perhaps, more than anything else, shows the evil effect of our contact with Protestantism, since the first and most powerful effort of Protestantism was directed against the authority of the Church, and a pronounced indifference to Church authority has always been a leading characteristic of its history.

Were time to permit we could with profit study other causes of worldliness in religion, such as love of material gain and human respect. Let it suffice to say that of these the former is a most powerful means of diverting man's attention from the spiritual to the material world. It materializes him, so to speak, and renders his religious practice mechanical. It finally

dims his vision to all save mammon. There is hardly a more pitiable creature in the world than the so-called Catholic who is ruled by human respect. The species is rare, thanks to God, yet from time to time we meet an individual who believes in Jesus Christ and His Church and yet who is ashamed to confess them. This man would not dare to make any external sign to show his allegiance, he would not wear upon his bosom any sacramental, he would not discuss religious truth for fear of being (what the Blessed Paul esteemed a crowning glory) a fool for Christ's sake.

Let us endeavor, beloved, to arrive at a correct notion of what "being a Catholic" really is. Fundamental in that concept must be the realization that by no species of accommodation can we reconcile religion with worldliness. True it is, we are in the world and of necessity mixed up with many worldly considerations, but this need in no wise impede or substantially injure our service of Christ and the Church. Our loyalty to the Church must be absolute and unconditional. Though we may without

the sacrifice of principle, and consistently with devotion to the Church, criticise certain lines of policy pursued, let us say by this or that pontiff, we may never adopt a similar attitude toward any doctrine or devotional practice sanctioned by the Church's supreme authority. As Cardinal Newman says, "The Church does not allow her children to entertain any doubt of her teaching, and that simply for this reason, because they are Catholics only while they have faith, and faith is incompatible with doubt." (1) Hence there can be no trifling with that sacred gift. If God has blessed you with plenty or with social position, understand well that these things carry with them responsibilities, but they form no title to God's favor. Riches for the most part form an obstacle to spiritual progress. Our blessed Lord Himself assures us of the difficulty which besets the rich man in the matter of his salvation. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the rich man to enter

1 Newman's "Faith and Doubt" (Sermons to Mixed Congregations).

into the kingdom of heaven." (2) Of course Christ meant by the rich man the individual who is inordinately attached to his wealth, and has no consciousness of the fact that the possession of riches entails serious duties to others. So, then, no matter what your position or your wealth, know that in the sight of God you are no better than the beggar or the humblest member of society. Be convinced, furthermore, that these may be placed immeasurably above you by their fidelity to God's law. To regulate your religious practices by social differences is to reduce your personal religion to a worthless formality. Never allow human respect to dominate you. Let it be your proudest privilege to profess yourself a Catholic. You have been chosen from amongst millions of humanity, who have never received the priceless inheritance of faith. You possess that gift, not by merit or desert, but by an ineffable grace of Jesus Christ. Live up, then, to your glorious vocation, and if your position in life is such that you are responsible for little ones, either as parents

2 Matt. XIX, 24.

or guardians, appreciate the fact that the highest and most important expression of that responsibility has to do with giving them a safe and sound religious training, which will ensure their future devotion and loyalty to the Church.

CHRIST OUR TEACHER.

"Ego sum via veritas et vita."
"I am the way, the truth and the life." (1)

"The world," says the illustrious Newman, "was to have certain great intellectual teachers and no others. Homer and Aristotle, with the poets and philosophers who circle about them, were to be the school-masters of all generations." (2) This assertion, though perfectly true, from Newman's view point, has little, if any meaning for humanity, taken as a whole. The voices of those ancient masters are heard with marvelous distinctness, though the "glory that was Greece" has forever passed, yet it was reserved for one who was regarded neither as poet, or philosopher, to speak to the uttermost bounds of the earth, and to give to man an enduring lesson. He, above all others, is the School-master of all generations. The speculations of Greek philosophy and the various ethical systems which grew out of it,

1 Joan XIV, 6.
2 Historical Lectures (Athenian Schools).

had but little effect upon the minds and wills of its disciples. Since all conclusions were subject to the approval of the individual intellect. Not so, however, with the teaching of the world's great Master, Jesus Christ. He gave to the world a perfect system of doctrine and morality, and the greatest sanction of His teachings was His own personal authority. He taught "as one having power, and not as the Scribes and Pharisees." (1)

At the time of Christ's advent, the human race was in a sorry plight. The thousand objects which polytheism offered as claimants of man's worship, had made religion an abominable extravagance. Vice was idealized where culture had found an entrance, and its shameless consummation was common where ignorance prevailed. Sin had, consequently, wrought extensive ravages upon man's moral nature.

There was need most manifest of some great teacher, who, by a stupendous act, would raise humanity to a condition consonant with man's natural dignity and ultimate destiny. Such a teacher, such an

1 Matt. VII, 29.

emancipator, the world has received in the person of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. From a human point of view there was little to favor the notion that the mission of Jesus, would eventuate successfully. He came to revolutionize the existing order. The idea of God's unity, which He was to insist upon as the basic line, the very foundation of His system, was well-nigh universally obscured. The union of religion with morality had been disrupted, and this disruption had opened the way to all impurity among the nations. Humility, self-denial and charity were to be necessary characteristics of His followers, and of these, the first was regarded as a voluntary abandonment of self-respect; the second, as a species of drivel, save when exercised for country, and the third was hardly known. But Jesus Christ came teaching "as one having authority," and He taught as none had ever taught before; with an assurance that baffled His enemies, and a power which compelled their respect. The personalities of the world's great leaders of thought, and propagandists of religious and ethical systems, when contrasted with the

personality of Jesus Christ, dwindle into insignificance, and their moral standards, as compared with His, are crude.

The sublimity and sincerity of Jesus Christ place Him immeasurably distant from all the public teachers and leaders of men that the world knows of. The sublimity of Jesus Christ is not a quality that appears in sporadic flashes. It is ever palpable. Not for a moment does its bright luster diminish. "It is for this reason," says the incomparable Lacordaire, "that notwithstanding the great treasury of literary masterpieces, the gospel remains a unique and inimitable book." (1) It is, however, by penetrating the veil of Christ's simplicity that we begin to behold His sublimity. "A new commandment I give unto you," says Jesus, "that you love one another as I have loved you." (2) This declaration does not, at first view, impress us as the expression of a sublime soul, so much as do the words which the poet puts into the mouth of the stoical old Roman.

1 Conferences (Public Power of Jesus Christ).

2 Joan XIII, 34.

"Set honor in one eye, and death in the other,
And I will look on both indifferently,
For let gods so speed me, as I love
The name of honor more than I fear death." (1)

Again, "The maid is not dead, but sleepeth," (2) seems almost weak as the manifestation of the consciousness of Divine power, when compared with the words of Caesar to the boatman, terrified and appalled at the storm. "What fearest thou? Thou carriest Caesar."

But when in the first instance we examine Christ's precept of charity, in its meaning upon His disciples and upon the nations that would be subjugated to His name; when we consider that declaration of Jesus Christ, in the light of the universal brotherhood which it was to effect—a brotherhood having its sole cause in religious doctrine; when, finally, we study the precept in the light of the example which Jesus Christ made its foundation, namely, that intense, most tender and yearning love for men, which filled His soul; ah! then we begin to perceive in some little measure the incomparably august

1 Shakespeare (Julius Caesar).

2 Matt. IX, 24.

nature of His words through their veil of simplicity. "She is not dead, but sleepeth."(1) How utterly simple! The Scriptures tell us that the bystanders laughed Him to scorn. But it is the expression of Divine power. As by laying our hand upon one who slumbers we may rouse him to a sentient condition, in like manner, the deepest of slumbers, profoundest of lethargies, death, yields immediately to the gentle touch of Jesus Christ, for to Him it is no more than the lightest of slumbers.

What shall we say of His sincerity? Sublime thoughts and expressions do not afford an absolute guarantee of either honesty or sincerity, but the sincerity of Jesus Christ is beyond all legitimate doubt, as is proven from His circumstances and methods as a public teacher. He did not possess the headship of a strong following nor did He rely upon the support of any earthly potentate. He sought not by prodigious acts to awe, or terrify those to whom He addressed himself, yet He claimed divinity and demanded the adoration that is due to God; and further

1 Joan XVII, 21.

still, in establishing His position, He despised all human expedients. "Ego et Pater unum sumus. "I and the Father are one," says He. "'Qui videt me, videt et Patrem," Who sees me, sees the Father." (1) There is not the remotest suggestion of diplomacy or policy, no sounding of opinion, no cultivation of favor. Eminently self-sufficient, hence, unquestionably sincere, and as the testimony of two thousand years demonstrates, He was the properest of agents, the most admirably fitted for the fulfillment of a religious design of tremendous proportions, and the simple gospel narrative, setting forth the record of His life, has done more for the uplifting of men than all the sayings of philosophers, than all the exhortations of moralists.

The mere inculcation of correct ethical principles will not guarantee success to a teacher or reformer of society. His doctrine must be re-inforced by good example. An astute hypocrite might succeed for awhile, but the denudation of his life would sound the death-knell of his success. The propa-

1 Joan XIV, 9.

gandist of a high norm of morality, whose personal life is a contradiction of his teaching is but half equipped. In Jesus Christ we find a most perfect agreement between what He taught and what He actually did. Before publicly insisting upon the practice of those virtues which must be found in every Christian life, He taught the same by years of good example, in an humble home at Nazareth. When He said: "I am the way, learn of me." He meant to place His whole life before His hearers as a powerful object lesson.

Though a general view of the life of our great Teacher is sufficient to elicit our praise and admiration, yet it is expedient to study in detail some few of the lessons which He has taught us, in order that our present consideration may have some definite and practical fruits. Our Blessed Savior was a perfect exemplar of every virtue, yet there are none so manifest in His life and teaching as humility, self-denial and charity. From the first moment of His imprisonment in the virginal womb of His mother until the last throe of agony upon Golgotha's bloody sum-

mit, the life of Jesus was a state of most abject humility. The very notion of the Incarnation imports a humiliation that is utterly beyond our grasp. The idea that God's Eternal Son, equal to the Father in power, like to Him, God, condescended to empty Himself of His majesty, to sacrifice the circumstances of His glory, in exchange for the wretched rags of human nature, simply baffles the human intellect. When declaring Himself the model, the exemplar, for His disciples to follow, He chose to dignify His humility as a most especial characteristic. "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." (1) In order the better to make clear His disregard, nay, more, His contempt for the vanities of the human mind and heart, He chose twelve men from the lowest stratum of society for His brethren and with these humble instruments He has established His universal empire of souls. He kept the company of the neglected and the sinful, yea, He was called the friend of sinners. What self-abasement, nay, more, what degradation of a Divine personality! His

1 Matt. XI, 29.

humility is so closely bound up with the practice of self-denial, that it is impossible to view these two virtues apart in Christ's blessed life. "Si quis vult post me venire, abneget senetipsum tollat crucem suam et sequatur me." "If anyone will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (1) Behold the shivering babe of Bethlehem, ushered into the world amidst circumstances of poverty and suffering. His young life was consistent with its abject beginning, and when the veil that hides His life at Nazareth from our view is withdrawn, again His self-denial and mortification impress us most palpably. Consider for a moment His fasting in the desert, and harken to that pathetic plaint, wherein He declares, that less fortunate than the birds of the air, and the foxes, He has nowhere to rest. What words shall describe the mortification of the heart, the endurance of insult and injury, the meek acceptance of contumely, ceaseless misrepresentation and persecution, terminating in the indescribable horrors of His passion and death? "The

1 Matt. XVI, 24.

cross, and the cross always His standard, during His life, at its close and after His death." * * * "Bleeding and ghastly, lifted up in nakedness, stretched out in dislocation, He wishes to keep Himself before the eyes of saints and sinners alike until the end of time." (1)

The charity of Jesus Christ is the motive of all His humiliation and His mortification. Nay, more, it was the motive of His coming, His death and even His resurrection. His was a love that brought Him to our poor level, from the height of Infinite majesty, a love which made Him one of us. It was a charity that rendered Him amenable to human friendship. "Behold how He loved him," (2) whispers the multitudes, as Jesus, groaning with a heartrending grief, approached the tomb of His friend, Lazarus. It was a charity that made Him the lover of little ones. 'Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me." (3) It was a charity that elicited pity for the widow

1 Newman's Serm. to Mixed Cong. (Mystery of Divine Condescension).

2 Joan XI, 36.

3 Matt. XIX, 14.

and orphan; that made the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the very dead to rise; a charity which exhausted, (if I may dare say it) Divine goodness, since it culminated in Jesus Christ giving all that He could, in bestowing upon us His own sweet Self. His charity was without discrimination, most tender, but absolutely pure. At the invitation of Simon, the Pharisee, the Savior is seated at the latter's table partaking of his hospitality, and during the progress of the feast a woman appears upon the threshold. She is wildly beautiful. Her cheek is paler than alabaster, and her lustrous tresses are disheveled. A thousand adulteries and fornications weigh ponderously upon her wretched soul. She trembles in the presence of God's immaculate purity. She is about to turn and flee, but the eye of Divine love holds her captive, and hesitating but an instant, she rushes in, regardless of surroundings, and throws herself at the feet of Jesus. How black her sins must show at those white feet! Her heart is bursting with love and contrition; with scalding tears and spikenard, she bathes those feet, and kisses them a

thousand times, and wipes them with her tresses, and then, with upturned face, she gazes unto the countenance of Jesus with a mute, but most eloquent appeal for mercy. O, the tender, anxious love for sinners, which manifests itself in the sentence of forgiveness. His boundless regard for the souls of men had its clear echo in her heart and hence, her pardon. "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much." (1)

> "Wherefore, this I say:—
> Her sins—her many sins—are wiped away,
> Even as from these my feet her tears were wiped,
> For she loved much! But where forgiveness
> Is little, love is little
> Go in peace! Thy sins
> Are all forgiven." (2)

What an ineffably sublime climax did the charity of Jesus reach, when amidst the agonies of His crucifixion, He breathed forth that most touching appeal in behalf of His very murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (3)

1 Luke VII, 47.

2 Edwin Arnold, The Light of the World.

3 Luke XXIII, 34.

Strange and lamentable the fact that passionate frenzy and indifference have blinded men, so as to render their vision insensible to the clear evidences of the goodness and greatness of Jesus Christ, and His proper relations with the souls of men. Stranger still, and perhaps more to be deplored the fact, that even amongst those who have in infancy been signed by the indelible character, whereby men become partakers of His heritage, and children of the household of His Father, many are found whom His sublimity has ceased to inspire, and whose hearts are no longer amenable to the warming influence of His love.

Let us look into our souls with a view to finding out to what extent we have reproduced our Divine exemplar, more particularly with regard to humility, self-denial and charity. Are we not puffed up with vain conceits, rather than meek and humble of heart? It is not a matter of serious difficulty for us to endure without feelings of resentment, the slightest wound inflicted upon our vanity and self-love? Nay, more, do we not go so far as to encourage our neighbor, by positive

acts, to entertain a higher estimation of us than is meet? And is not our motive thus in acting the merest self-complacency? It is hardly extravagant to say that the trend of many so-called Christian lives is in the direction of exaggerating before the eye of the world, their real or imagined excellence.

What shall we say of self-denial? It is frequently an unknown quantity in the lives of those who call themselves followers of the Crucified. Some one has said that our luxuries are exponents of our civilization. If we look about us, we find that this declaration has great support. Art and science are pressed into service for the purpose of augmenting our comfort more than for any other end. Immortification and sensuality are rife on every side. How many Christians look upon slight privations in the light of real misfortunes? How many, again, regard the performance of ordinary religious duties with repugnance? Their name is legion. As an effect of all this, our moral energies suffer a sort of paralysis, and we bear not even a slight resemblance to Him, who calls upon us to regard Him as our pattern and

example. "I am the way. Learn of me."(1)

Do we meet with better results when we study our spiritual condition regarding charity? What sort of love have we for Jesus Christ? Are our hearts sufficiently attached to Him to keep us in the path of His commandments? When we have to choose between Christ and the world, between the love we owe Him and sin, between treason to Him, and resistance to temptation, how do we elect? Oh, who could pen the infidelities to the Heart of Jesus Christ on the part of His own? Who could write those annals, even though he had a thousand years for the performance of his task? There is another element in that love which is our duty, and this other concerns itself with the love for the neighbor. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." (2) This fraternal charity is, then, the special mark whereby the world shall recognize the disciples of Christ, and our failings against it are beyond count. In a thousand ways we behold Christians

1 Joan XIV, 6.

2 Joan XIII, 35.

manifesting coldness, contempt and even hatred toward those whom they are commanded to love, as they love themselves. We are indifferent regarding the care we should take of the neighbor's good name, and nearly insensible to his necessities, both spiritual and temporal, and yet by Christ's precept of love we are our brothers' keepers. Where is my personal Christianity, if I am devoid of that note whereby men know the Lord's followers? Where is my love for Christ if I possess no real charity for my neighbors? The Inspired Word brands that man as a liar who declares he loves God, when, as a matter of fact, he hates his neighbor. (1) The more ardent, the more self-sacrificing, the more sympathetic my love for my neighbor, and the more practical my efforts to put that love into action, the more clearly do I show my real love for Jesus; for the love of Him is the sole motive and explanation of my fraternal charity.

O Jesus, do Thou make us humble, mortified and loving. Teach us the vanity of all save Thee—teach us the value of humil-

1 Ep. Joan V, 20.

iation, nay, more, even degradation for Thy sweet sake. Help us crucify our flesh and its lusts, and when its dread power is about to overcome our weak resistance, O teach us, Thou, to cry out with Peter sinking in the waves, "Lord, save us, we perish." (1) Above all, sweet Lord, teach us to love. Set our poor cold hearts aflame for Thee and those whom Thou dost love. Give us some little taste of that great love with which, in its fullness, we hope to burn forever.

1 Matt. VIII, 25.

SALVATION.

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" (1)

When the Almighty pronounced the word which called man forth from nothing into being, constituting him the chiefest of earthly creatures, it was not solely a creative act. God did not simply make man and then turn him adrift, to do as he might list and to choose whatever end he might propose to himself. The word which made man a reality, determined his functions and destined him for a particular end. The Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity were, (so to speak), in solemn council assembled, and the result of their deliberations is found in these words of Holy Writ: "Faciamus hominen secundum imaginem et similitudinem nostram," "Let us make man according to our image and likeness." (2) That is, (as we may paraphrase the text),

1 Mark VIII, 36.

2 Gen. I, 26.

"Let us make a creature that shall possess an immortal spirit, which shall be endowed with intelligence and freedom." And the functions of that creature were determined with due regard to his exalted gifts, and the end appointed for him was worthy of a creature upon whom is stamped the image and likeness of the Triune God.

We learn from the pages of the little catechism, that man was created to know, love and serve God in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in heaven. It is perfectly clear from Holy Writ that the happiness celestial, for which man is destined, is nothing else than the perfection of that knowledge, love and service which make up our duty toward God here below. Our knowledge of God here is most imperfect. Now, we know Him, as says the Apostle, "Through a glass and in a dark manner," (1) but after the days of our pilgrimage it will be ours to "Know Him as He is," to see Him "face to face." (2) Now we perceive Him through symbols, through

1 Cor. XIII, 12.

2 Ibid.

His creatures, and most especially through His revelations, but when all figures shall have passed away, and faith shall have blossomed into vision, then shall burst upon our souls the full blaze of His splendor, and we shall behold Him surrounded by the glory of His Infinite majesty. All inquiry and speculation shall be swallowed up in the fruition of most perfect and most abundant knowledge.

As our knowledge of God is imperfect here upon earth, likewise is our love. The love of God which is without flaw is the love founded upon a perfect sense of His amiability, and such a love is only found in the souls of the blessed in heaven. A most intense and ardent love, following upon a clear appreciation of God, will possess the soul forever. We shall be set on fire by the flames of His eternal charity, we shall be consumed with love. And with the realization that God is most holy, most just, most merciful, most lovable,—in a word, absolutely perfect,—we will rest in Him forever, and our service shall consist in eternally singing His praises. This, then, is our end, to be

associated with those blessed spirits that group themselves about the throne of God's majesty in ecstatic adoration, and chant forever hosannas and alleluias.

Beloved, the achievement of this end, however, is our personal work. That is to say, the Almighty has made us free, and hence, responsible, and has decreed that the chief exercise of our responsibility should be the working out of our salvation. He has given us a law as a lamp to our feet, and has promised the help necessary to overcome the difficulties we may encounter in achieving our glorious end, but in His wisdom He has determined that the work of salvation shall be a personal labor in the case of every member of the human family that has reached discretion's years. This labor may vary in detail with different individuals, but essentially it is the same for all. No one can save my soul, nor can I save the soul of another. Others may offer up the incense of prayer in my behalf, they may lead lives of sacrifice for my spiritual welfare, nay, more, others may pour out their blood upon the altar of fraternal

charity for me, and all these taken together would be powerless to effect my salvation, unless I co-operated and labored in my own interest. It is not the offering of food to a famishing man that saves his life, but rather the actual consumption of that food on the part of the sufferer, who would surely die of hunger, even though he were surrounded by the most nutritious viands, if in his madness he refused to touch them. The wisdom of God demands that the work of salvation should be of an unquestionably personal character. This determination on the part of the Almighty is an expression of regard for the God-like characteristic of rational freedom with which, out of his Infinite generosity, He has endowed us. He could not thus have made me and then have left me to be the sport of my own whims. All things else He has created that, by the fulfillment of some special function, they may reach a certain end. He has created the sun to give light and warmth the earth that it might germinate. Surely, then, since He has made man for the destiny which we have just rehearsed, and

since He has made him so wonderfully capable, it follows that man's chief function is the personal working out of the Divine Will in his regard, and that is, laboring in the cause of his salvation. If I fail so to do, then I am an incumbrance in creation. I am positively a nuisance and I become an efficient cause of discord in creation's wondrous harmony.

The next consideration which must occupy our attention is that of the extreme importance of the work of our salvation. Our Blessed Savior asks the question: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" So that the gratification of every conceivable desire here upon earth, and the possession of all things that could in any manner conduce to earthly satisfaction, would weigh absolutely naught against the eternal perdition of a soul, nay, they would appear utterly insignificant in the light of such a woeful price. We are like swift winged birds, our passage is rapid through life, and in a few little days we reach eternity. Man shall go into the home of eternity. Here

we have no rest, no abiding place, eternity is our goal,—eternity, whether of unspeakable bliss or unutterable woe. Our years chase each other with astounding rapidity, and our pilgrimage is without the faintest suggestion of perfect felicity. O, the blindness of men's minds, that they should so generally place their end in earthly things. Here we have an individual who fancies that life will reveal its most desirable treasures to him in the prosecution of a political career. He exercises himself most laboriously to achieve the object of his ambition, and at length (let us suppose) he succeeds. He is momentarily delighted, but, alas, all too soon this intoxication vanishes. He shortly discovers that his satisfaction is in nowise commensurate with his anticipations. After a brief space he is dispossessed. Perhaps his constituents fall from him, and he topples over and falls with a crash to the common level. The woman who has given her best energies to the attainment of social success, who mayhap, has succeeded for a time, finds out the emptiness of it all when, gazing into her mirror, she beholds that the

lustre and color have departed from her tresses and the rose from her cheek, and is thus confronted with the palpable reasons why her star has set. Others there are who fancy that in the gratification of their sensuous proclivities they will find the happiness which the human heart so constantly yearns for. But, alas, the gall and bitterness of a man's degradation, when upon his mind is forced the appalling conviction, that he has fed upon husks of swine, and so habituated has he become to them that he can desire nothing better. "For they have said, reasoning with themselves, but not right: Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth." "These things they thought and were deceived, for their own malice blinded them." (1) Whether our idea of happiness is centered in the gratification of what the world would regard as a respectable ambition, or in succumbing to the allurements of sensuality, the mistake is alike obvious, for death is the end of all such seeming joys

1 Wisdom II, 6, 21.

and consolations, and as the icy fingers of this monster close about our throats, we come face to face with the dreadful problem of our eternity. And even those who fancy that in the midst of earthly gratifications they obtain a sufficiency of happiness, simply force upon their intelligence the grossest self-deception. For, though trying to forget God and the work of their salvation, their souls wander toward eternity as to a home-land, their spirits run beyond time and space, beyond planets and suns and far-off comets, yearning, (not, perhaps, explicitly,) to find repose and peace in the great immensity beyond.

What is the value of eternal salvation? "This may be estimated from two principles, namely, the teaching and example of those whose judgment is unimpeachable, and by its intrinsic nature and importance. First, how have the wise and good and prudent valued it? Ask St. Paul and the martyrs of Holy Church how they valued it. They will all reply that the tribulations of this life could not compare with their weight of

glory. (1) Ask of the confessors and virgins, and with one voice they will reply that their lives of labor, of penance, of poverty, sacrifice and detachment are as nothing when compared with eternal salvation." (2) When we consider but momentarily that the Almighty sent His only Son upon earth to live a life of poverty, suffering and degradation, and, finally, sacrificed Him to a death of ignominy for our salvation, and when we reflect upon the sacraments and the great Mystic Sacrifice, all of which have in view the same end, then our minds must be deeply convinced of the tremendous importance of the work of achieving our glorious destiny. As to its intrinsic worth, it suffices to say that God's revelation is filled with references to the incomparable joys of heaven. St. Paul assures us that the nature of that happiness which God bestows upon the blessed above, is such as to transcend all the experience of man's ideas and conceptions. Our daily experience amid the vexations, the sorrows and sufferings of life, is assuredly

1 2 Cor. IV, 17.

2 Clare, S. J., Spiritual Life, (Importance of Salvation).

enough to convince us that an abode of perfect happiness, wherefrom is excluded the very possibility of pain, has a wondrous intrinsic value, and that it is worth our supremest efforts to arrive at its possession. What madness, then, there is in so living here as to endanger its attainment, by running the risk of unending wretchedness. Do you imagine that any material gain which you may obtain in life will redound to your benefit in the world to come? Or, do you fancy that your labors performed here with such perfect diligence to obtain the favor of men, or their applause, or a little of the world's ease, will aid the cause of your salvation? The rich man of whom the Scriptures speak had filled his barns, and had procured for himself every comfort that the earth could afford, and said unto himself: "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest, eat, drink, make good cheer," (1) and that night as he reclined upon his couch of down, nestling there to enjoy sweet slumbers and dream, mayhap, of his gold and wondrous stores,

1 Luke XII, 19.

he was startled, and the blood froze in his veins as he heard the awful summons: "Fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee." (1) Come before the dread tribunal of eternal justice and render an account of thy stewardship. Speak not of thy labors to amass the precious things of earth, speak not of thy positions of honor or prestige among thy fellows, but declare with what fidelity thou hast kept the law of the most high. Fool, thou hast placed thy happiness in perishable goods. Thou hast neglected to store up riches in heaven, "where no thief approacheth nor moth corrupteth," (2) and so shall thy labors damn thee. Hearken to the voice of thy Judge: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?" And yet, beloved, we find among us men who declare that they have but little, if any, time to devote to the work of saving their souls, no time to secure a happy eternity! The Supreme Arbiter of life and death has placed us here for the

1 Ibid 20.

2 Luke XII, 33.

sole purpose of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, and yet we who are the creatures of His hands, absolutely dependent upon Him for the very air we breathe, declare that we have no time for His service.

Alas, for us, if it will be our dreadful lot to look back upon a series of opportunities wasted and ignored. Woe to us if, when the hand of death is upon us, we shall be possessed of a keen consciousness of the dread meaning of those little words, "too late." Had we two souls to save we might, perchance, risk the loss of one and save the other. Such, however, is not the case, hence, if my soul goes down to the abysmal depths of hell, all is irrevocably lost and I am irreparably ruined. It is in the light of this dreadful truth that we begin to see and understand the wisdom of the saints as seen in their patience and long-suffering, their humility, self-abnegation, nay, crucifixion of self, their fear of God's justice, their sense of their own unworthiness, and their supplications for mercy. How well they knew how far removed from all the other

concerns of life is the business of salvation, and in the light of that knowledge, how readily did they strip themselves of the world's goods. What magnificent contempt did they manifest for the world with all its honors, its pleasures and allurements. In a word, how intimately and with what penetration did they understand those words of the Master: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?"

The work of saving our souls is, finally, the only work we have to do in life. Though our duties to society and to ourselves and families demand that we interest ourselves in earthy affairs, and labor in the business of the world, yet little depends upon our success. I may be a dismal failure at securing a livelihood, I may be a fool in the eyes of my fellowmen, I may be the victim of a hundred different sorts of misfortune, yet all this can not injure my standing, one jot or tittle, in the eye of God. If my soul is straight before the All Seeing Judge, then my foolishness and misfortune will be buried in the ocean of eternal

oblivion, but if I am a failure in the matter of working out my salvation, if in that affair I meet with a fatal accident, then I am forever lost. Logically, then, we conclude that whatever we do in this life, either directly or at least indirectly, must conduce to our salvation, otherwise it is unworthy and serves but to draw us from the achievement of our proper end.

Would to God that we might be penetrated with the awful moment of the theme we are now considering. Would that we might seriously enter into the solitude of our hearts and endeavor to produce in our souls deep, earnest and abiding convictions as to the necessity of being up and doing in the matter of salvation. Beware of delay! Who has the guarantee of a month, a week, a day, nay, even an hour? How many are in hell at this moment who placed their hopes in the fond dream of a future repentance? Look down into the abyss and fancy, if you can, the shrieks of despair, the howling of impotent rage that emanate from that awful depth, and know that, prominent among the unutterable agonies which

oppress those wretched souls; is the memory of the fact that they refused to hear the voice of Divine Wisdom calling them from the path of iniquity to work in the cause of their salvation. O, the memory of graces despised, the broken law, the voice of conscience stifled, religion neglected and despised, God forever lost. May the God of mercy arouse and enlighten us if, perhaps, we have slept, and fill us with the fear of His judgments. May He make us realize His design in placing us here, and lead us as little ones in the observance of His law, making us to see the truth of His word. "There is nothing better than the fear of God, and there is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of the Lord." "It is a great glory to follow the Lord, for length of days shall be received from Him."

(Eccles. XXXIII, 37, 38.)

MORTAL SIN.

"Amen, amen, I say unto you, that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin." St. John VIII, 33.

We have seen in our reflections on the end of man, that by the exercise of his rational freedom, assisted by the grace of God, he is enabled to arrive at eternal conpanionship with God. We come now to the consideration of the sole obstacle in the way of man's achieving his glorious destiny: An obstacle which obscures his spiritual vision, which causes him to prostitute the freedom of his will; an obstacle which may finally cut him off forever from God and consign him to eternal perdition. The name of this obstacle is mortal sin, the parent and origin of all that the world looks upon as evil; the only thing in fine, worthy the name of evil.

Go into the wards of a hospital and study some of the wretchedness that confronts you there. Look at that miserable creature who is the victim of a deathly fever. He is but a vestige of his former self. Two ruddy spots illuminate the ghastly pallor of his

countenance, and indicate the fire that rages in his veins. Note well his wasted limbs and hark to the short, rapid and painful respiration. The fingers of death are rapidly closing about his throat. What does it all mean? *Fructus peccati;* it is the fruit of sin. Look again, at that other sufferer—the victim of some dreadful accident. Note the crushed head, the broken limb, the ruby tide with which flows away his life. List to his shrieks and agonizing cries. *Fructus peccati*; it is the fruit of sin. Look again, at those human beings bereft of the use of their rational faculties, confined by bars of iron; this one a drivelling idiot—this other wild with the frenzy of madness, and this other worse than childish in his foolishness. What means this horrible picture? *Fructus peccati*; it is the fruit of sin. Go in spirit into the prisons of the world, and consider the plight of those poor wretches bereft of honor, reputation, society and liberty. Consider the conditions of degradation, depravity, misery, poverty, and suffering of every sort under which so many of those who were made to the image of God, actually exist.

Consider but for a moment the injustice, oppression, and bloodshed that have gone to form so large a portion of the world's history. Beloved, it all spells mortal sin. Not only is mortal sin the parent and origin of all that the world esteems as evil, but it alone is worthy the name of evil, for sin alone can deprive me of essential good. All other evils are of a transitory nature, they are but ephemeral, nay, more, they may be turned to my spiritual advantage, but sin can achieve an eternal effect by depriving me forever of my God.

All that I have said, Beloved, is directly and unmistakably set forth in God's revelation. The original blessedness of man as he came from the creative hand, precluded suffering of whatever sort. God had raised man in Adam from "the dust of his unassisted frail humanity" to set him in a place of eminent honor. He had made him almost the equal of those blessed spirits the angels, in respect to light, self-control and immortality, and from that blessed estate he was precipitated by sin. Beloved, have you ever seriously considered the fact that one

single mortal sin revolutionized the plans of God and converted this world from a paradise of pleasure to a valley of tears? Have you ever tried to study the mind of God in respect to sin, from the fact that because of sin the Almighty cried out that He repented of having made man, and straightway destroyed him from the face of the earth, saving only that little remnant of humanity which was preserved in the Ark of Noe? Again and again are we struck with the harrowing details of dread manifestations of divine wrath because of sin—the pouring out of the phials of retribution upon cities and peoples—even the surrendering of his own chosen nation to degradation and bondage. But the most overwhelming evidence in the temporal order of God's abomination and hatred of sin, lies in the fact, that He sacrificed the adorable object of His love, His own Divine Son—to the death of a criminal, in order that fitting propitiation might be made to His own outraged majesty.

If the mind sickens at the contemplation of the temporal punishments which sin has occasioned, what shall we say of the effects

of a serious consideration of its eternal punishment. Never ending separation from the source of all joy and happiness; everlasting endurance of unspeakable torments. So odious, so loathesome, then, is sin in the eye of God, that though He has made us to His image and likeness; though He has destined us for an eternity of bliss in His blessed company; though He loves us with an immeasurable love; nevertheless, He is willing to cast us from Himself forever, to plunge us into the depths of eternal despair, to afflict us with excruciating agonies which will know no term, if by sin the original beauty of our souls is disfigured. Ah, Beloved, a keen insight into this dread truth should so control our spiritual life, that we would rather a thousand times die than that sin should pollute the sanctuaries of our souls. Alas, however, the blindness of men's minds, and the hardness of their hearts are such, that millions live in the supremest indifference to this tremendous fact.

Let us study mortal sin in some detail. Let us draw near this horrible monster and examine it's lineaments in order to be pene-

trated with the thought of it's deformity. The catechism tells us that mortal sin is a grievous offence against the law of God; an offence, therefore, not of a trivial character but one which is a striking infringement of God's legislation, a great wrong in very truth, and not a mere peccadillo, if, indeed, the slighest sin may so be called. An offense mind you, not an accidental breaking of the law. An act in the philosophical sense human, that is to say, one which brings into play the intellect and will; hence, an act for which the agent is responsible. It is an act to which the mind has so far adverted as to comprehend it's disorder. It is an act, finally, into which the will flows by exercising a perfect consent. It is perfectly clear that the omission of a grave duty may constitute sin as well as a positive act, and it is expedient to observe that an interior act may render us guilty of mortal sin even though it be unaccompanied by any external expression. "Whatsoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her

in his heart." (1) The malice of mortal sin presents three aspects. It is first and before all else an act of rebellion against divine authority. "Vile as I am, soul and body, by sin I put myself on an equality with God; as though I were as good as He. I refuse to accept a position of subjection and inferiority. It is so with every rebel and his liege-lord; he is always a leveller and an upstart. When we commit mortal sin, we make self the centre around which God and everything else is to revolve; our will is to rule, and God's is to be ruled. This is surely the worst part of sin; the personal opposition of the creature to the creator, of will to will; of our self-love to the love of God; the objective harm, which is the matter of prohibition, is a little evil compared with this. (2) Every mortal sin is a clear and unmistakable repetition of Satan's "*Non serviam*," "I will not serve." Though the human being does not sin in the full blaze of light which illuminated the angelic minds, even at the moment of their

1 Matt. V, 28.

2 Tyrrell, S. J. Hard Sayings ("Sin Judged by Reason").

perfidy, nevertheless, his act is essentially the same as was theirs, since it is a direct attack upon God's power and a direct insult to His majesty.

The second aspect of the malice of mortal sin deals with its ingratitude. The Almighty does not stand in relation to me, as my King, the Supreme Arbiter of life and death only, but He also occupies in my regard, the relation of Creator, Preserver and Father. He did not need me as a complement of His glory, yet out of His beneficence He drew me forth from nothing. Every blessing, whether of the spiritual or the temporal order which I have received, has come from His gracious endowment. He had loved me with a love that knows no human expression. Though His hatred of sin, compelled Him, if I may dare so to speak, to sacrifice His Christ to degradation and death, yet that sacrifice was made in order that He might gather His poor wandering children once again to Himself, and give them opportunity of regaining His favor and of repairing their shattered spiritual fortunes. In view of all this, who will

sound the depths of ingratitude which one mortal sin contains? And what shall I say of the countless mortal sins that blacken the souls of so many who call themselves Christians. If this monstrous ingratitude must be predicated of my first mortal sin, it has been deepened and augmented by every succeeding offence. God might have cut me off in the midst of my iniquity; He might have sent his angel to destroy me; He might have denied me all further grace. What, in fact, has he done? He has overwhelmed me with forgiveness and generosity. He has followed me in my degradation and has lifted me from the mire of my filthiness, and has restored me to righteousness. Notwithstanding this abasement and condescension on the part of God, I have continued to cast aside His grace and to trample His law. Who shall adequately describe the sinner's ingratitude?

The third aspect of the malice of mortal sin is this that mortal sin is an act of spiritual suicide. It is the deliberate extinction of the soul's life, by a turning away from God, and the placing of one's choice in

creatures. It is a clearly expressed choice of wrong rather than right, a preference for eternal death over eternal life. The sinner says, "I hate God, I love that which He loathes and holds in absolute odium, and I prefer never ending separation from Him, and everlasting misery, to his eternal companionship in the midst of beatitude." "What madness then is mortal sin! For a moment's gratification, for the merest bagatelle, I am willing to sacrifice the only permanent happiness to which I can attain."

A great mystery which confronts us when meditating upon sin, is the fact that it is so very common, common even among those who know by faith its enormity. There is no phenomenon more familar to us than mortal sin; and in many of its forms the world looks upon it as a sort of necessary evil. Men joke about one another's iniquities, as though they were merely entertaining trivialities. The public conscience, even in Christian communities, is not aroused by sin, save when it expresses itself in murder, or some other particularly shocking injustice. "The earth is infected by the inhabi-

tants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws * * * therefore, shall a curse devour the earth?" (1) These words of the sad-souled Isaias have far more application in our midst than they had amid the circumstances which called them forth. Is it not true that many of us settle ourselves cozily into a sort of conviction, that after all, our sins are rather manifestations of human weakness than of malice? The logical result of all this, Beloved, is, that thousands of Christians drink in sin like water. "There are times when we think that if there were no God, no future life, no restrictions and prohibitions, life would be aimless, indeed, inexplicable, unmeaning, yet, for it's brief span, so much easier, more painless, more enjoyable, that we almost regret our high destiny as sons of God, and envy those whose consciences have grown callous to scruples and remorse. The constant peace and blessedness of God's service makes but a slight dint in our memory, compared with the occasional crosses and restraints which are the small price we pay for it." (2) If

1 Is. XXIV. 5, 6.
2 Tyrrell, S. J. Hard Sayings (Sin Judged by Reason).

such thoughts suggest themselves to the minds of those who make some serious endeavor in the way of righteousness who will enumerate their conquests in the souls of those who are the world's captives, and who are fettered by habits of sin!

Let us read the tablets of our hearts in order to know how we have appreciated mortal sin. Alas! for most of us what a sorry perusal that inspection means. If, upon the record of our consciences, we were to find but one mortal sin, then, according to the mind of one of the great Fathers of the Church, we have sufficient reason for the continuous shedding of the tears of contrition. But this introspection, at least for most of us, would reveal a story unspeakably more dreadful. Who shall measure our ingratitude, our rebellion? What words will describe that malice whereby we have endeavored, as says the Apostle, to crucify Jesus Christ again and again by our iniquities? Have we, alas, so fallen under the dominion of the Evil One, that our iniquites are deeply rooted habits, enthralling us in the most degraded of slaveries? Have we

been walking this many a day along the edge of an awful chasm in danger every moment of being precipitated into the abysmal depths of everlasting perdition? O Beloved, let us stop and reflect, and smite our breasts, crying out to the All Merciful God to stay the exercise of justice and wrath. Let us ask Jesus Christ to break our hearts with sorrow for our infidelities, and that we may be deeply penetrated with those dread words of the prophet Joel, "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can stand it?" (1) "Be converted to me with all your heart in fasting, in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord, your God." There are many who become horrified at their dreadful spiritual condition at times, and are stricken with a salutary fear of God's justice, when they behold their souls disfigured with the leprosy of mortal sin, and they turn to the Almighty in their anguish and cry out to him with hearts apparently filled with repentance, and yet, who shortly after this mani-

1 Joel II, 2 et seq.

festation of supernatural dispositions, fall back miserably into their former weaknesses. The explanation of this phenomenon is not far to seek. This turning to God is unaccompanied with any serious reflection. It consists of a fervid and emotional act of contrition, with a hazy resolve in the direction of future fidelity. There is no meditation upon the proximate occasions of past delinquencies, no abiding sense of insecurity, no realization of the urgent necessity of avoiding this dangerous person, place or thing, that has exercised so powerful an influence in the past in the matter of leading the soul to the forfeiture of grace for the husks of sin. Again, it is a fact frequently observed by those whose business in life is the care of souls, that the habitual sinner who has been lifted from the captivity of sin to the liberty of spirit which belongs to the children of God, fancies himself secure and immune from the influences of temptation, as soon as he begins to breathe the pure air of God's grace; and this spiritual recklessness is but the preparation for new calamities.

Let us realize, Beloved, that though affliction of spirit is the fundamental element in our sorrow, yet the sense of our weakness and imbecility is strictly necessary to our future fidelity. Let us walk circumspectly, "Redeeming the time," as says the Apostle, "not as unwise but as wise men." (1) Let us beg our blessed Redeemer to fill us with a deep, earnest conviction regarding the necessity of continuous watchfulness, and to bestow upon us that appreciation of our own nothingness which possessed the soul of Blessed Paul, "Not that we are able to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2) "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation," (3) says Christ, and experience demonstrates that this watchfulness and prayer may never be relaxed. Finally, let us not be discouraged even though we have lived only to offend God, for despair would but add to our guilt and drag us down more readily to perdition. Let us rather, through our tears of sorrow, look meekly up

1 Eph. V. 15, 16. 3 Matt. XXVI, 41.
2 Cor. III, 5.

to Him, who loves us with infinite tenderness, begging Him for heart and hope, and grace to manifest the sincerity of our penance by leading Christian lives.

DEATH.

"Statutum est hominibus semel mori."
"It is appointed unto men once to die."—Heb. IX, 27.

We live in a world of mystery. The marvelous surrounds us on every side. We can give the last analysis of hardly any of nature's phenomena. Substance and matter are terms familiar to every ear, yet what do we know of them? The wise men of the world have quarrelled for ages about their essential constituents, and the end of their philosophical conjecture and speculation is not yet in sight. What is more mysterious than the law of death and destruction, whether we view it only in its relation to mankind, or in its larger, more universal application? With reason as the sole guide who will give us a satisfactory philosophy of death? Why should the little acorn expand and develop into the mighty giant of the mountain side, only to succumb to the laws of disintegration and death? Why should nature develop the

forms of strength, beauty, suppleness, keen instinct and perfection of organism, which we behold in the animal creation, since these forms all, inevitably, yield to the edict of destruction? How much more difficult it is to answer the same question when it is proposed regarding man. A noted preacher of the age has said that as nature proclaims the existence of a Supreme Being, so the law of destruction and death, which we behold so universally applied in nature, proclaims the anger and vengeance of that same Being, for the rebellion of His responsible creatures. Although this proposition is not beyond question, yet it furnishes a reasonable and probable explanation of death, and is thoroughly congruous with the teaching of revelation, for we know from the words of inspiration that death, at least in its relation to man, is a manifestation of divine anger.

"Statutum est hominibus semel mori." "It is appointed unto men once to die." (1) Men have called into question every other truth, but not this. "Thou shalt die the

1 Heb. IX, 27.

death." (1) Everybody capable of any realization knows with certainty that this sentence has been passed upon him, and that it will surely achieve its proper effect. We need not faith or revelation to prove this truth to us; reason and daily experience demonstrate it most fully. What is more familiar than death? We look upon it in the countenance of those whom the monster has marked for his own, and whose destruction is being wrought by his agent, disease. We study it in the pallid countenance of a corpse. Our attention is frequently arrested by its mournful pageantry, the funeral procession, and we feel its power in the grief and bereavement of the relations and friends of its victims. We see it everywhere, and we are deeply conscious that there will come a moment when death will fasten his icy fingers about our throats and shall crush out in us the vital spark. Nature hates it, nature trembles at the thought of it. There is no human ill which may be remotely compared with it.

1 Gen. II, 17.

Go into a house where death has seized for its prey the mother of a family. There, in a coffin, lies exposed the body of one whom those around called by the sweetest name given to mortals. Study the agony depicted upon the face of that young man who gazes in mute appeal upon that cold, expressionless countenance, which has mirrored for him the fondest affection, the warmest love and most delicate feelings of which the human breast is capable. A mighty sorrow fills this boy's heart and finds expression in heartrending sobs and copious tears. Look into the face of that daughter who fondly kisses the cold, clammy cheek of her dead mother, and trembles in her grief, as she realizes that her great protection has been wrested from her. Study the grief of a young mother over the lifeless form of her babe, or the anguish of a wife from whom death has ruthlessly torn a faithful and loving husband. Yes, Beloved, death is truly horrible, but to ignore the thought of it were madness, as we shall further see.

The most harrowing thought concerning death has no relation to the physical misery or the temporal sorrow which it brings in its train. No, Beloved, that thought concerns itself with the world to come. Death teaches us, above and before aught else, the transitory, ephemeral nature of all earthly things, and a meditation upon death brings most prominently before our minds the truth that the quality of our death will determine our eternal happiness or eternal misery. Hence, Holy Scripture declares those blessed who die in the Lord, "Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur," "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord;" (1) and again, the same inspired word declares the sinner's death appalling. "Before thy death work justice, for in hell there is no finding food." (2) Death is the end of all material things. "We must leave riches, honors, pleasures, our very bodies, dress, ornaments and all our surroundings. We are like men asleep and dreaming life away, but death is a great awakener, and when it arouses us,

1 Apoc. XIV, 13.

2 Ecclus. XIV, 17.

we shall see and judge all things aright. We cannot take anything with us, but others will dislodge us and put us in a few feet of earth. Granted that our life was one of triumph and glory, still we shall die just like the humblest and most obscure." (1) O God, what a contemplation! Gaze at the rich man in the clutches of death. His couch is of down, but he no longer knows its softness. He is surrounded by every luxury, but there is a film over his eyes and he can no longer feast his vision upon those bagatelles. He is surrounded by friends, but his ear is no longer pleased with the music of their flattery. The treasures which he so diligently amassed are slipping through his stiffening fingers, and so, with a few agonizing gasps, he is dead. Men talk of him until the day of his obsequies; they will gather about his grave, but the closing of his tomb out of their memories forever shuts him. Go, again, into that charnal house a few days after the funeral bell has ceased its mournful music and what a dreadful apparition greets your eye, a black-

1 Clare, S. J., "The Spiritual Life"—Death.

lipped, hollow-eyed, ghastly corpse, which vile worms are beginning to feast upon, and which they will utterly devour. Examine more closely. That face was, perhaps, a face endowed with beauty, its complexion clear, and the blush of a rose lived in that cheek, but lo! how changed. All semblance of loveliness has forever vanished. In those hollow sockets there once dwelt eyes which sparkled with light and vivacity, and they, too, whither are they gone? That body was once filled with warm blood which imparted health and strength to its various members, and while in the enjoyment of life, perhaps, it was pampered and perfumed and indulged. Yea, perhaps, it reveled in lustful excesses, was worshipped and clad in fine raiment. Look at that heap of corruption and tremble with a mighty fear if you have placed your comfort in the fleeting gratifications of time. Listen to the voices which issue from that open grave, as you stand gazing at its ghastly prisoner, "Heri mihi, tibi hodie," "Yesterday for me, to-day for thee." (1) Yes, listen well to that awful message.

1 Ecclus. XXXVIII, 23.

The contemplation of that dead and rotten body is horrible from an objective point of view, but how much more, yea, immeasurably more harrowing does it become when we endeavor to realize that the dreadful picture before us represents most accurately our own future condition. What an overwhelming reflection! There shall come a day when those who now love me with the tenderest of loves, when those who are bound to me with the chords of Adam, and those to whose hearts mine is united by the ties of friendship, will fly, perhaps, from the poisoning stench of my decaying carcass.

Ah, what a leveler is death. As you gaze upon the rotten form which we have placed before our mind's eye, can you discover the difference between the prince and pauper, the intellectual aristocrat and the ignorant clown? Nay, more, between the crowned king and the lowest of his peasant subjects? No, the notes of individuality or personality are obliterated forever by the hand of the destroyer.

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
All that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await, alike, the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave." (1)

"All men are earth and ashes," (2) saith the Holy Ghost. How utterly insignificant and worthless, then, appear all earthly possessions, honors, comforts and pleasures in the presence of death. "Heri mihi, tibi hodie."

This lesson in the vanity of transitory things is not the sole result of our reflections on death. We have said that a meditation upon this theme brings us forcibly face to face with the awful fact that our death determines our eternity. God has made us free and responsible. He has, further, determined that the highest exercise of our freedom should be realized in the working out of our salvation, that is, in living according to the principles of God's law and dying in the state of justification. I have said that death determines our eternity, because if, when the summons comes, calling my spirit forth from its dwelling-house

1 Gray—Elegy.

2 Ecclus XVII, 31.

of clay, that spirit shall rejoice in the possession of God's grace, then my going into the valley of shades means simply my entrance upon the possession of eternal glory. If, on the other hand, my guilty spirit be weighted down by mortal sin, when I shall go forth to render an account of my stewardship, then my evil dispositions shall become stereotyped, so to speak, and for all eternity, an impassable gulf shall separate me from God and the joys of His home. Hence, the necessity of having a wholesome fear of death, and also the necessity of profound convictions concerning the great responsibility under which each one of us rests, of so ordering our lives as to die well.

I shall surely die. This is an awful truth, yet much less fear-inspiring than the dreadful uncertainty which surrounds my death. When shall I die? How shall I die? Where shall I die? The answers to all these little queries are secrets hidden in the heart of God. When shall I die? Perhaps to-day or to-morrow, mayhap a month hence. "Estote parati, nescitis diem neque horam." "Be ye prepared, ye know not the day nor

the hour." (1) I have a little moment of time in my possession. It is the present. The future is utterly and completely beyond my control; nay, more, I do not possess the guarantee of five minutes of its time. Where shall I die? Shall it be at home, surrounded by relatives and sympathetic friends? Or shall it be among those whom I know not and in the midst of strange circumstances and conditions? How shall I die? Shall I die a natural death, or shall I be the unfortunate victim of some dreadful violence or treachery? Shall I die in the friendship of God, or shall I die in mortal sin? Alas, even this I know not. We are simply told by Divine Truth to be diligently prepared, for we know not the day or the hour. How intelligible are the words of the apostle who speaks of working out our salvation with fear and trembling. How many of us appreciate, even after the most inadequate fashion, the dreadful meaning of those words, "I know not whether I shall die God's friend or His enemy." O, the unspeakable madness that has seized our

1 Mark XIII, 33.

minds and hearts, that blinds our intelligence in such wise that we think but of earthly affairs, and so corrupts our hearts that our loves are, for the most part, directed toward creatures, when we know, infallibly that at the summons we must throw aside forever the playthings of life and follow. Fortune has been kind to some of us, perhaps, and life may have been, for the most part, happy, and the world may have so fascinated us with its pleasures, that we are loath to think of such a gruesome topic as death. Yes, the sweet, yearning, tender and even wild notes of the world's music may have held our hearts captive this many a day, but alas, its music will suddenly die away, and woe to us if our enthrallments have lasted till the end. How many fools put their trust in robust physical constitutions, or in human prudence and care to ward off the approach of death? The poor wretch who was crushed under the wheels of a locomotive this morning, died, perhaps in mortal sin. As he left his home to attend to his daily avocation he had never a doubt as to his return at eventide. The individual

who was found dead in his bed, and who had lived a life of sin, retired, perchance, with some sort of resolve to arrange the affairs of his soul, and set his house in order, and as he closed his eyes in slumber he heard a dread voice, "Thou fool, this night, this night, do they require thy soul of thee." (1) How many are burning in hell at this very moment, writhing in the agonies of eternal despair, who placed their hopes in the fond dream of future repentance, when the shadows of death were already descending upon them? How many are dwellers in that abyss of sorrows eternal, who made some sort of effort to repair a life, reeking with iniquity, by an insufficient act of repentance, elicited when the cold sweat of death was already beginning to break upon their brows? Beloved, the dying man, in the vast majority of cases, is utterly unfit for the work of redeeming a mis-spent life. The forces of nature are so debilitated that he is incapable of effort, either intellectual or physical. Further than this, it is expedient to observe that the dying are generally in-

1 Luke XII, 20.

different to death, that is to say, their consciousness is of so low an order, that death's approach does not arouse them. "Think of thy last end and thou shalt never sin." (1) There is no subject proposed by the Church for our contemplation more thoroughly and reasonably calculated to stir in us fear of God's wrath, and to impel us on to fidelity in His service, than death. Alas, that we are so callous to its harrowing appeal. Perhaps some of us are in sin, so that our sudden taking off would mean our eternal perdition. If such be the case, ask the Almighty for an awakening of conscience in the silent night, and as the touch of grace lays open to your inspection your inner life, read, as in a book, that you may be terrified at the perusal, and cry to God for mercy. Regrets and broken resolves chase each other over the soul like the swift-winged birds of night, and infidelities of every species rise up distinct and clear from the uneasy but limpid depths of memory. Read in all this the sentence of your condemnation, if death overtakes you ere you repent. "Estote parati." "Be ye prepared."

1 Ecclus. VII, 40.

The death of the just is free from terror. There is salutary fear of God's judgments, and there is an abiding, nay, immovable, trust and confidence in God's love and mercy. Truly is the death of the just man "gain," as St. Paul calls it. It is the entering upon the possession of an eternal inheritance of joys that know no human expression. When the eyes of God's servants close in death the light of eternity illumines their pallid countenances, and reveals a suggestion of eternal peace and rest. God grant that ours may be the death of the just. May He lead us like little ones through the dark and the storm, helping us so to order our lives that they will lead, logically, to holy deaths. And when that supreme hour arrives, may He fortify us with His wondrous dispensations of grace, the sacraments of the Church. May our spirits be strengthened and refreshed by the flesh and blood of Him who, for us, died upon the wood, that those spirits may go forth with joy and confidence. What a beautiful subject for contemplation; the soul filled with the charity of Jesus Christ about

to meet its Judge. God grant that such may be our going forth; that we may faintly hear the sweet strains of angels' music, as we leave the sordid earth and all its sorrows. Loving hands will be stretched forth to stay us, yea, and voices of those we loved will cry out to us to tarry. But we will push those fond arms gently back, and forth shall we speed from our fragile dwelling-house, and over the waters, but nothing daunted by the gloom, for the strains of that music shall clearer grow as onward we speed, and as the sunshine of God's blessed home shall break upon us, and as our souls shall be transported by the celestial melodies, we shall be ushered into the presence of the Almighty Judge, and from His blessed lips we shall drink in the words which shall unite us to Him forever. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over few things I will place thee over many, enter into the joys of thy Lord." (1)

1 Matt. XXV, 21.

JUDGMENT.

"Dies illa, dies iræ calamitatis et miseriæ, dies magna et amara valde dum veneris judicare sæculum per ignem."

"That day is a day of wrath, of wasting and of misery, a great and most bitter day, when Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire."—(Office of the Dead.)

Beloved, the philosophers tell us that the sense of the beautiful and sublime is natural to man, and that from this sense flows the love and appreciation of beauty and sublimity. This appreciation, though crude and undeveloped, exists even in the souls of savages. We are especially conscious of this sense in our souls, since by God's loving indulgence, we enjoy the benefits of a high civilization. We love to gaze upon the mountains, as rosy-fingered morn, clad in saffron and gold, steps blithely over their summits; or, again, at eventide, when they are obscured by mists of opal. We love to feast our eyes upon the hills, bathed in the golden luxuriance of the sun's rays, or to study the shimmer of the moon's silver light upon the placid bosom of a lake. We

stand upon the seashore, filled with emotion, as we note the eternal trouble of the waves, and list to the monotonous requiem they chant so ceaselessly over the dead buried in the ocean's awful depths. Our sense of the beautiful is not aroused, nor the depths of our emotions stirred only by those things of wonder and sublimity, which are directly from the creative hand. No, Beloved, we admire, and are deeply affected by the works of art and genius. We look with ecstatic admiration upon the mute figure of marble, which the sculptor's hand has all but invested with life. We listen with rapture to the poet singing his heroes, and their vicissitudes and deeds of valor and tragic endings; or, again, to his sweet pastoral lays, which speak the softer and merrier phases of life. We are controlled and led captive by the sweet strains of music.

The gospel story, Beloved, abounds in the narrative of facts which teem with those characteristics most calculated to stir men's souls to their lowest depths; beauty, awfulness, sublimity, and yet, for the most part, these wondrous facts impress us but slightly.

What more full of beauty than the vision of my Jesus transfigured upon the mountain top? What more awe-inspiring than the dead Lazarus breaking asunder the bonds of death and coming forth from the sepulchre in the freshness of life, restored by the simple command of Christ? What grander than the picture of the calm-visaged Saviour, rising in majesty before the warring elements, subduing the surging billows and the shrieking winds by His simple word of command, "Peace, be still!" What shall we say of that sublimest of dramas, most awful of tragedies—The God-man lifted up in nakedness and stretched out in dislocation—dead, amidst most dreadful upheavals of nature? Finally, what more awful than the description of His last coming: "There shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves. Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of Heavens

shall be moved, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty?" (1)

"And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall fall from heaven." "And, then shall appear the Sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty and He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together His elect from the farthest parts of the heavens, to the uttermost bounds of them." (2)

Strange, dearly Beloved, that thousands of those who know Christ and His revelation by faith, should be utterly callous to these thrilling descriptions. These words should stir us more deeply, rouse us more fully than the most striking creations of intelligence and imagination, since they describe an absolute and tremendous fact, one hav-

1 Luke XXI, 25, et-seq.

2 Matt. XXIV, 29, et-seq.

ing relations of the highest conceivable import to mankind, taken as a whole, a fact, finally, of harrowing interest to each individual member of society. Almighty God has made us responsible beings. Since then, man is responsible, and since God gives him the powers requisite for the performance of the work committed to him, we conclude the reasonableness, the perfect justice of God in arraigning man before His dread bar of justice. As we reflect upon this mighty drama, which has both its joyous and terrible side, we are reminded of those striking words of the ninety-first psalm, "O Lord, how great are thy works, thy thoughts are exceedingly deep. The senseless man shall not know, nor will the fool understand these things. When the wicked shall spring up as grass, and the workers of iniquity shall appear, that they may perish forever and ever." "The just shall flourish like the palm tree. They shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God."

The gathering of the just to the eternal dwelling-house of God, is the triumph of that divine love and mercy, which were the

motives of Jesus Christ's bloody sacrifice on Calvary;—and the eternal repudiation of the reprobates is the triumph of that justice which remains forever. No theme within the scope of human thought has furnished more inspiration to preacher, poet or painter, than the General Judgment. In those wondrous temples reared by the tremendous religious energy of the Middle Ages, we find some of the greatest triumphs of genius consecrated to this subject. We find it vividly represented by the sculptor's hand. Within the hallowed precincts of the sanctuary we see it again, receiving all the fervid devotion of the painter's talent, and, finally, we behold it brilliantly portrayed upon many of the glorious windows that fill those sacred fanes with such a wealth of soft radiance.

And when, from the four winds of heaven, the tribes shall obey the trumpet peal, when the sea shall give up its dead and the desert the victims of its trackless wastes, when into the valley of judgment the entire human family shall be gathered together, then shall the Son of Man come, clad in the panoply of His majesty, and all His angels with him.

The better to appreciate the signification which the General Judgment has for the individual soul, it is expedient to reflect upon the fact, which determines the sentences of Jesus Christ on the last day. That fact, Beloved, is the awful interview which takes place between the soul and its judge immediately after its earthly pilgrimage. Consider the sinner in the presence of his God. That soul is suddenly illuminated by the light of eternity, and in that light grasps with a lucidity, which baffles description, the full extent of its obligations, all the consequences of the graces showered upon it, and all the malice of its sins, "In thy light we shall see light,"* says the psalmist. Not, indeed, that this Soul was without that illumination required during its pilgrimage, for the right understanding of its duties. Your soul, O sinner, in the presence of God. There is no possible avenue of escape. What an appalling situation! Behold this disciple of mammon, this voluptuary, this contemner of religious obligations, in the presence of that Judge who has beheld every

* Ps. XXXV, 10.

infidelity of this poor wretch, yea, whose vision has penetrated to the most secret hiding-place of the sinner's heart, and who now is about to wreak eternal vengeance upon the unfortunate. Is there testimony against him? Yes, his lord and master, that being whom he has served with much fidelity—the devil—is his chief accuser. The arch-fiend shall confront the unfortunate wretch with this query: "How hast thou fulfilled the promises of baptism whereby thou didst vow to renounce me and my machinations?" Then, turning to the Judge: "Eternal and Omnipotent Judge, my blood did not purple the soil of Gethsemane's sombre shades for him, nor was the thorny crown of ignominy and agony pressed upon my brows for him, nor was I suspended 'twixt heaven and earth, a mangled victim of human frenzy for him; all these things didst Thou suffer to purchase for him eternal joys, yet I was his master. Thou has lost him forever. Pronounce the sentence that will secure him to me. Let him be mine through sin, since he has refused to be Thine through grace." This is the fact that shall determine the sin-

ner's position on the last day, "when the heavens and the earth shall be moved!" This, the fact that shall place him upon the left of the Judge to await the sentence, which shall condemn him irrevocably and irremediably to an eternity of misery.

Behold the Judge, seated upon His throne, Jesus Christ; but what a marvelous transition has been wrought! Is this the helpless babe of Bethlehem that fled before the wrath of Herod? Is this the humble boy of Nazareth—this, the meek-eyed prophet, who went about teaching and consoling, healing and forgiving—the lover of little ones, the voluntary victim of contumely, misrepresentation, persecution and even death? Can this be Jesus, who was known as the sinner's friend, his brother, his redeemer? Yes, it is He, but to-day, oblivious of all other titles, He is simply the Judge. "Ask of me, and I will give to thee the nations of the earth for thine inheritance." (1) This the command of the Eternal Father. "Father" says the divine Son, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." "And

1 Ps. II, 8.

now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with that glory which I had before the world was, with thee." (1) And as he sits upon the Judgment seat, He is come into the possession of universal empire, and the tribes of the earth are His inheritance, and they are at His feet, awaiting judgment. What a Judge! Holiness itself; hence, having for even the slightest iniquity a horror, which no word could express "Si iniquitates observaveris Domine, Domine, quis sustinebit." "If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand it?" (2) A Judge from whose notice no secret hiding-place of the soul shall cover up lurking guilt—for He is omniscient; from that eye no shameful deed shall obtain concealment. O God! the confusion of that moment. "Justitia ejus manet in sæculum sæculi." His justice continueth forever and ever." (3) A Judge absolutely and eternally just, omnipotent,—hence, from His sentence there is no appeal; immutable,

1 Joan XVII, 4, 5.
2 Ps. CVI, 3.
3 Ps. CX, 3.

therefore, through endless eternities, not a jot or a tittle of His sentence shall be revoked. None shall escape the examination, no sin, therefore, shall escape chastisement. How overwhelming the thought of this awful drama! How terrifying to each and every one of us, when we reflect upon it in its relations to our sins! In order that the perfection of His justice shall be manifest to every creature, He shall force the reprobate to drink the cup of confusion to its bitterest dregs. "Nothing is covered that shall not be revealed!" "nor hid that shall not be known." (1) "Ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him; the judgment sat and the books were opened." (2) The depravity and perversity of the wicked shall be proclaimed before the entire world. Sins against religion, sins against the name of God and against His day, sins of parent against child, and of child against parent, sins of anger, scandal and revenge, the dark deeds of murder and lust, even those hidden from all, save the eye of God, sins of injus-

1 Matt. X, 26.

2 Dan. VII, 10.

tice and fraud, sins of detraction and calumny, sins of pretence and hypocrisy, the breaking down of Christ's law of love, sins of the mind and of the heart, sins of omission, in a word, every sin that shall have gone to make up the horrible history of human infidelity. "Nothing is hidden that shall not be revealed." And when the dreadful ceremony of gathering the testimonies shall have been fulfilled, the Judge shall rise to pronounce sentence. To the just gathered upon his right, to those whose lives have been marked by a faithful observance of His Father's Commandments, or who have, at least, washed away their sins with the tears of efficacious repentance—to those he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you."* Enter into the possession of eternal joys in my Father's house where there shall be no tears, nor sighs, nor griefs, nor heartaches forever. There shall your cup of joy be full; there shall you be set on fire by the flames of divine love, and basking in the sunlight of my Father's countenance,

* Matt. XXV, 34.

you shall sing the anthems of eternal praise. Enter in, and take up your abodes in the courts of eternal peace. Turning to the wicked, He shall say in a voice of thunder, "Depart, ye accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for Satan and his angels." * Begone, every tie between us is severed forever. Hence, into the eternal abyss ye wandering sheep, I am no longer your Shepherd. In my kingdom ye shall have nought of inheritance. Depart, ye accursed, accursed in your intellects, which shall never know the consolation of a holy thought, accursed in your reprobate hearts, into which there shall never enter a ray of hope, nay, which shall be sunk in the depths of despair eternally. Depart into everlasting fire.

Beloved, may we not, without any violent stretch of imagination, fancy the howls of despair that shall rise from that motley throng of damned souls, as they shall troop toward their abode of never ending misery? The poet Dante describes in his fancy the gate of hell, and upon the keystone of its arch he inscribes these words, "All ye that enter

* Matt. XXV, 34.

here leave all hope behind." (1) Although this is a creation of his poetic genius, yet, Beloved, it embodies an infallible doctrine of our faith. The damned lose God, they lose Him through no fault save theirs, and they lose Him forever. These dread truths are all-sufficient for contemplation and fruitful meditation upon the truth of the judgment of God, though we should live a thousand years. As the damned shall gaze upon Christ, clad in the garment of His glory, they will see in Him the end for which they were created. They will become convinced by a most powerful object-lesson that He, alone, was worth living for; that He, alone, is the universal good; He, alone, perfect and beautiful and amiable, and in the knowledge, furnished at that dread moment by one brilliant flash, they shall learn what they have lost. This knowledge shall become maddening, because, voluntarily, they rejected Him, because they despised Him.

Add to this the consciousness that the loss is irremediable, and then the mind is

1 Inferno, Canto III.

almost paralyzed by the terrible reflection. Beloved, "The day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can stand it?" * The lesson of the Judgment is one of salutary fear, that fear which is a lamp to our feet in the way of righteousness, the way which leads us to eternal union with God. That lesson of fear can not be learned, Beloved, without deep reflection upon the meaning of death and the value of time. We know by faith that our death determines the quality of our judgment, and hence the death of the sinner is the worst conceivable death, since it determines the sentence which will plunge the sinner's soul into hell. And the quality of our death is determined by our appreciation of the time given to us for the working out of our salvation. The world values an object because it is rare, or because it conduces largely to man's comfort and luxury. Why do we regard gold with so much higher an estimation than that which we bestow upon the basest of metals? One will not support animal life more than the other, but the former is infinitely rarer than the latter, and as such gathers to itself

* Joel II, 10.

appreciation and power, and makes itself valuable in procuring luxurious conditions of life. Who will rightly appreciate the rarity of time? The past is gone from me forever. The future is completely outside of my control. I have in my possession but one little moment and lo! it is hastily slipping away. What is its value? Beloved, it may determine my judgment. Nay, there shall come a moment of time that shall surely determine that judgment, and, ultimately, my eternity. O, let us tremble at the thought of that great day, "That day of wrath, of wasting and of misery." Let us realize as far as we can the great personal meaning that day has for us.

> "Quando judex est venturus
> Cuncta stricte discussurus,"
>
> "When descending from the sky,
> Comes the Judge our souls to try," *

that dread day of scrutiny and examination. And let us resolve so to live, as to earn a title to that sentence which shall make us co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom of His Father. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you."

* Hymn "Dies Irae."

HEAVEN.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love Him." (1)

Is life worth the living? How frequently do we hear this little query proposed by the men and women around us. Society, with its patent insensibility to religious truth, daily discusses the above question. Books and pamphlets and brochures by the score have had this interrogation or its equivalent as title and theme. It is never asked seriously by those who believe in God's interest in the human soul and its destiny, and given a soul without religious belief, utterly incredulous of an hereafter, I confess that the query seems reasonable, for if our existence here is the be all and end all, then, truly, it is hardly worth the living. There is no happiness joined with security; there is no real haven of rest; no joy unaccompanied with the consciousness that it will soon exhaust itself and be followed, perhaps,

1 1 Cor. II, 9.

by pain; no pleasure that gives complete satisfaction; few indeed, that are not mingled with bitterness. There is no love that may not be exposed to the chilly blasts of indifference or inconstancy. There is no perfect satisfaction to the inquiring mind. Well has this great big world of ours been called a valley of tears, for wretchedness, disease, misery, infidelity and blood-shed form a tremendous element in its sad, sad history.

Is life worth living? Beloved, we find an unspeakably consoling answer in the words of my text: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for those that love Him." But what is the connection between question and answer? some one may say. Simply this, that the condition placed for the ultimate enjoyment of the aforesaid happiness is the successful living of life. Upon the stupendous fact of judgment we have already meditated, and we have endeavored, as best we could, to peep into the dreadful abode of the damned, and hence, it is fitting that to-day we should

endeavor to learn a lesson of consolation and hope from a few thoughts on heaven. The words of our text would seem at first view to discourage us from meditating upon heaven. It would appear like trying to climb an inaccessible height, since even the most illumined notions of the joys of the blessed have fallen utterly short of the reality. "It hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive" of them, says the Apostle. Yet the Divine Word furnishes us with so many glimpses and suggestions as to make it perfectly clear that God wishes us to apply our minds, even after our poor feeble manner, to the happiness of His celestial home, and the saints and doctors of the Church have given us an abundance of teaching upon this consoling truth.

According to the teaching of St. Thomas, the Angelic Doctor, the eternal happiness for which man is destined will consist in the highest conceivable operation of his being, namely, the operation of his intellect, and that highest conceivable exercise of this faculty will be realized, says St. Thomas, in knowing God as He is. "Everything in

an actual state of existence," says the saint, "is assuredly knowable."(1) Now God is the purest of actualities without any admixture of accident, and hence, is beyond doubt knowable. Although knowable by His very nature, yet on account of the immensity of His being He may be unintelligible to a created intellect, just as the sun, which is unquestionably visible, may not be easily gazed at on account of its excessive brilliancy. Hence, some amongst the older theologians of the Church maintained that the vision and understanding of God was utterly impossible to the human soul. In answer to this we say with St. Thomas, that if the intellect of man cannot ultimately look upon the essence of God, then either man will obtain no ultimate beatitude, or he shall find it elsewhere than in God, and both hypotheses are diagonally opposed to faith and Holy Scripture. There is, furthermore, in the mind of man an intense and constant desire to know the cause as soon as an effect is brought under observation. This does not concern itself with sec-

1 Summa. Theol. I, 2, 12, a. c.

ondary causes only, and if the first cause is to hide Himself from us forever, then there has been placed by God in the souls of men an empty and utterly futile wish, which supposition is repugnant to reason. Consonant with this conclusion are the words of Holy Writ: "When He shall have appeared we shall be like to Him, and we shall see Him as He is." (1) In the contemplation of this thought I am forced to cry out with the Apostle, "Give thanks to God the Father, who hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light." (2)

"The lot of the saints in light," perfect knowledge, perfect love, possession of God forever. What is that light, the light of glory, which Scripture and Christian theology speak of so frequently? It is, Beloved, an illumination bestowed upon the created intellect in order that perception of God may be possible. Let us make this clear from a human analogy. "The strongest human eye in a most perfect condition of development, in order to see, needs that

1 1. Joan III, 2.

2 Coloss. I, 12.

light which makes the object of vision visible, and so in the blessed life to come, both our exterior and interior senses, in order that they may gaze upon the ineffably sublime objects of the supernatural world, need a light in harmony with that world supernatural and divine. The bodily organ may be as powerful and piercing as that of an eagle, yet nothing would or could be visible to it if no light existed to bring external objects within the scope of vision. * * * While we are in this body of the flesh, God and the entire spiritual world are shrouded in mist or darkness impenetrable. When the soul is freed from the body, and no moral obstacle interferes with her enjoyment of the rewards of the perfect life, the Creator, to prepare her for that clear knowledge of Himself which is the reward of faith, perfects all her powers. The supernatural element which He adds to the faculties He has Himself created is most aptly called by schools of theology and the councils the light of glory." (1)

"This light celestial elevates the human

1 Reilly, Novissima, p. 99.

intellect to a divine state of existence and vital action, enabling it to behold the Divine essence as it is in itself, expanding its capacity so as to embrace, as far as a finite being can, the Divine immensity. And the Divine revealed essence fills the soul with itself, an ocean of being, of perfection, beauty and loveliness." (1) The mind, in a word, is filled with God. All inquiry and speculation have died away and faith has blossomed into the enjoyment of perfect knowledge of the Divinity, seen in His height and depth, His length and breadth, and the will possesses and enjoys God by virtue of an entirely new capacity which has been communicated to it, an energy which unables it to sieze upon the source of all happiness.

What an awful contemplation! The heart almost recoils at the superabundant light, magnificence and splendor of the lot of saints. Gazing intelligently at the infinity of the Divine essence, understanding the immensity of His Being and the length of His days, if so I may speak, basking in the warmth of His eternal love, they rest in Him forever.

1 Reilly, Novissima, p. 99.

And they understand with ineffable clearness the wondrous harmony that exists between His justice and mercy, between His long-suffering and His mighty wrath. They profoundly realize that He alone is capable of filling every void in this poor, yearning soul of ours which so ceaselessly desires perfect, perpetual happiness. They behold with an indescribable clearness the three Divine Persons, and the most perfect fashion in which they proceed one from the other; how the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Spirit from Father and Son; they see the cycle of God's inner life. They see the reconciliation between free-will and God's fore-knowledge. They see all; they are set on fire by the knowledge of God's perfection and amiability, and they possess all forever and forever, with an undisturbable consciousness that the most perfect of all conceivable joys is theirs, a consciousness of absolute security, a consciousness of perfect rest. Their's the society and company of seraphim and cherubim, who ceaselessly chant the praises of the Most High; their's the company of thrones, dominations and

powers, that minister at the august throne of the Most Blessed Trinity. What a blessed society they themselves make up, the Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins, in a word, all those blessed souls who have run successfully in the course, who have fought the good fight, who have kept the faith, and who are now crowned with the laurels of victory, the crown of eternal justice, of never-fading glory.

This then, is our destiny, this the lot which infinite love has prepared for you and me individually. When we meditate upon heaven and its joys we begin to understand why the Almighty created us to His own image and likeness; we begin to perceive why His justice has been thwarted, so to speak, since the beginning of man's history, in order that His mercy might ever furnish the clearest evidence of His love for mankind. It is true that sporadically, He has poured out the vials of His wrath upon the heads of persistent sinners, and whole peoples have been swept from the face of the earth in consequence of these dreadful visitations.

But these instances are unwonted and extraordinary. We begin to grasp His patience, His benign providence, His love, which had its greatest outpouring in the giving of His adorable Son to suffering and death, in order that the rupture between Himself and His rebellious children might be effectually healed, and that they might again have an opportunity of enjoying Him forever.

What shall we say of that struggle for the achievement of eternal life, which is the lot of every one. Heaven is our destiny, but since we are both free and responsible, it is the reward of fidelity and perseverance in righteousness. The struggle is arduous, but He who has prepared for us the eternal joys, promises the strength and ability to wage successful warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. What are the chief motives for courage in this life-long battle? They are the powers arrayed on our side. God loving our souls, interested in their salvation as a matter intimately connected with His glory; Jesus Christ, His Son, who, as says Holy Writ, ceaslessly advocates our cause as Representative and High Priest;

His mother Mary, who desires, after the glory of her Lord, the fulfillment of the motive of Jesus Christ offering Himself a mangled victim on Calvary; our triumphant brethren, the saints above, who offer in our behalf the sweet incense of prayerful suffrage. Upon this earth we have the Church of Christ, with its sacraments, channels of divine grace, the means of regeneration, forgiveness and spiritual strength, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the most especially nourishing principle of the soul's life.

Who, dearly Beloved, in the face of these wondrous and most efficatious helps, need fall a prey to the devil's wily insinuations, the allurements of the world, or the corrupt tendencies of the flesh? We know that the tyranny of bad habits is difficult to overthrow, that the lethargy of indifference yields not easily to the suggestions of grace, but, Beloved, we have the unerring word of our Divine Exemplar, that no matter what the powers arrayed against us may be, the proper use of the means at our disposal will lead, unquestionably, to conquest.

What an incentive have we for struggling

on courageously, "walking circumspectly, redeeming the time!" The days are evil, it is true, and the world with its false maxims and principles, is, indeed, fascinating. Its gay, rollicking and careless spirit attunes itself, in a most insidious fashion, to our nature. Pride, ambition, selfishness and lust are rife on every side, and so accustomed do we become to vice, that we are sometimes tempted to think that it is rather a manifestation of simple, human frailty than of malice. And the path to heaven seems, at times, almost too difficult to travel. The cross, the inevitable cross, looms up continuously. That journey on towards heaven's gate means constant mortification of self, the patient endurance of wrong and, often enough, of gross injustice, affliction of spirit, and oftimes heart-break, the severance of the bonds of love, the willing endurance of suffering brought by disease and death. But, dearly Beloved, heaven is worth it all. Before us in the journey is the Man of Sorrows bearing a heavy cross, and on it the burden of our delinquencies. O the sorrow of that face! From time to

time He totters and falls, and His footprints are marked with blood that flows adown His sacred Person. Why this horrible spectacle? Jesus Christ is making heaven possible for you, and will you recoil? No, Beloved, let us trudge onward up the rocky steeps and through the cold, the storm and the dark, keeping our eyes fixed firmly upon the beacon light, which is our guiding star and there will come an end to the journey, and there shall dawn upon our vision, like a gorgeous sunburst, the light of God's blessed city, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its "Walls of jasper, its foundations of all manner of precious stones, its gates of pearl, and its streets of pure gold, transparent as glass." (1) There we shall dwell forever in the house of our Father, and there shall we see and know and love forever our own whom we have mourned, those near and dear, who have preceded us through the shadowy vale of death. Then shall we be united in Christ forever. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart knoweth no rest till it reposes in Thee." (2)

1. Apoc. XX, 18, 21.
2 St. Aug. Confessions, C. I.

God grant, dearly Beloved, that we who have turned our faces toward the blessed city may not perish by the wayside. May He who loved us unto the shedding of His blood lead us on, for perhaps, some of us are far from home. May He lead us on "Through the encircling gloom." May He keep our feet.

> "O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
> The night is gone." (1)

And when the blessed morn of eternity shall dawn upon us, in whose bright light the face of God, and the vision of His blessed angels and the Holy City shall burst upon us, we will cry out in rapture: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord, forever and forever shall they praise Thee." (2) "O Israel, how great is the house of God, and how vast is the place of His possession. It is great and hath no end; it is high and immense." (3)

1 Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light."
2 Ps. LXXXIII, 1, 5.
3 Baruch III, 24, 25.

PRAYER.

"Ask and it shall be given you." (1)

Beloved, experience teaches us that the human heart can do little to aid itself in the spiritual life. It stands in dire need of God's blessed hand, and in its most debilitated and feeble condition it is always invested with sufficient power to turn to Him. No matter what the sinner's record may be, God's mercy always keeps inviolate in that soul sufficient grace to cry out for Divine help. The necessity of this grace, however, is not confined to seasons of spiritual weakness and sinfulness, for though man can rise by the help of God to the heights of sanctity, yet there is never a moment when his own unassisted frailty may not betray him into the hands of the Devil. Hence, there must be always present a conviction as to the necessity of continually turning to God for grace, help and consolation. This turning to God is effected principally by

1 Matt. VII, 7.

the exercise of prayer. "The hand of our God is upon all those that seek Him in goodness." (1)

Prayer is the raising of our minds and hearts to God to adore and praise Him, to thank Him for His benefits, and to beg Him for all the graces and favors necessary to soul and body.

From this description of prayer, Beloved, it is plain that we may pray after different fashions; that there are various sorts or kinds of prayer. There is, first, the prayer of adoration and praise, by which we acknowledge the greatness of God and praise the wonderful excellence of His perfections. "I will give glory to thee, O Lord, among the nations, and I will sing a psalm to thy name," (2) says the psalmist. "Sing praises to our God, sing ye; sing praises to our King, sing ye. For God is king of all the earth, sing ye wisely; God shall reign over the nations; God sitteth on His holy throne." (3) "O praise the Lord all ye

1 Esdras VIII, 22.

2 Ps. XVII, 50.

3 Ps. XLVI, 7, 8, 9.

nations, praise Him all ye people." (1) Secondly, there is the prayer of thanks, by which we tender to God our tribute of gratitude for all that His tender mercies have bestowed upon us, whether of the spiritual or temporal order. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks always and for all things in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to God and the Father." (2) It was the neglect of this species of prayer, that caused the Prophet Isaias to cry out, "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have brought up children and have exalted them, but they have despised me. Woe to the sinful nation * * * ungracious children! they have forsaken the Lord." (3) Finally, Brethren, there is the prayer of petition or supplication, by which we implore God to grant us all we need, for soul and body. It is of this species of prayer that I wish to treat,

1 Ps. CXVI, 1.

2 Eph. V, 19, 20.

3 Is. I, 2, 4.

especially to-day, since petition is the principal part of prayer.

Prayer is strictly necessary as a means for obtaining salvation. The Catholic Church teaches us that in order to perform any act, having the slighest influence in the way of helping us on toward salvation, it is necessary that we be assisted by God's grace. This is founded upon the words of our Lord, Himself, who said, "Without me you can do nothing." (1) Now, Beloved, it has always been asserted by those men in the Church who are most deeply learned in the things of God, that we cannot obtain God's grace without earnest prayer. Therefore, it is clear to us all, that, if we can do nothing without God's assistance, and if that assistance is not obtained without beseeching God to grant it, then without prayer we cannot keep God's law. It is as if Christ had said, "Without me you can do nothing, and I will refuse you the aid necessary for you, successfully, to keep my law unless you ask for it." If we can make no serious effort at keeping the commandments

1 Joan XV, 5.

without prayer, much less, Beloved, would we be able to persevere in their constant observance without that same means for obtaining aid. Perseverance is a gift that the Almighty owes no one; it is purely gratuitous; given out of His benevolence and tender love for souls; hence it would be most unreasonable to suppose that God, who is infinite intelligence, bestows such a favor indiscriminately upon those who pray for it, and those who utterly neglect to do so. Therefore, prayer is strictly necessary in order to enter upon the observance of God's law, and it is more necessary in order to be constant in that observance. The experience of every one of us shows us unmistakably the necessity of prayer in order to serve God. Are not all our delinquencies traceable to the neglect of prayer? Did not our carelessness concerning the regular reception of the sacraments begin by the neglect of our morning or evening prayers? Did we become accustomed to regard the missing of Mass on Sundays as a trivial matter, until we had long before learned to ignore the necessity and obligation of saying our pray-

ers? A serious inspection of the causes that led to our spiritual disorders, dearly Beloved, will always reveal neglect of prayer as the first and principal.

Prayer is necessary in the second place, because God has commanded us to pray. "Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened," says the psalmist, "Seek His face evermore." (1) "Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation," (2) says Christ, and again, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (3) The theologians of the Church have interpreted these sacred words as implying a command on the part of Christ. And the common teaching upon the matter is, that the neglect of prayer for any notable length of time implies mortal guilt. "Pray without ceasing," (4) writes St. Paul to the Thessalonians and to his beloved Timothy. "I will, therefore, that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands without anger and

1. Ps. CIV, 4.
2 Matt. XXVI, 41.
3 Matt. VII, 7.
4 Thess. 5, 17.

contention." (1) Were there no other evidence, Beloved Brethren, of the necessity of prayer, save the fact our Divine Master and His Apostles inculcated it so very earnestly, this would be sufficient. Who of us doubts the truth of the great mystery of the Most Blessed Trinity? And yet why are we so thoroughly convinced that the God-head is one in essence and three in person? Simply because Jesus Christ has taught us this mysterious fact, and yet, Beloved, it is Christ more than any other who has taught us the necessity of prayer. Not only by formal precept has He insisted upon its necessity, but He has taught us by His own example. He prepared for His public ministry by devoting years to a life of prayer, communing with His Heavenly Father and why? Was it because He labored under the necessity of praying for Himself? Surely not. He prayed to teach us, by example, the absolute necessity for us, of having recourse to God in earnest supplication. Nor did He confine His habits of praying to the years preceding His public life; "and it came

1 1 Tim. II, 8.

to pass that He (Christ) went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in prayer of God;" (1) and we may conclude that this was not an extraordinary act on the part of Jesus, for when the betrayer Judas directed the soldiers, whose mission it was to apprehend the Savior, the night before Calvary's dreadful tragedy, he did not lead them into the city of Jerusalem, but went rather to the Mount of Olives, because the unfortunate wretch well knew that in the sombre shades of Gethsemane's garden the Master was wont to spend the night in prayer. Lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: "Father, glorify thou me." (2) On this prayer the learned Jesuit, Father Crasset, remarks; "Jesus prayed His Father to glorify His body." "Now, was not this His due? And, indeed, had He not merited it? Was it possible that His supplication could be met with refusal? Why then did He ask it? Because the Father had decreed not to grant any favor to man, not even to His Divine Son, except

1 Luke VI, 12.

2 Joan XVII, 4.

through prayer, the channel through which all grace flows." (1) "Ask my Son," saith He, "for all the nations of the earth, and I will give them to Thee for thine own inheritance." (2) Christ Jesus merited universal empire, yet He came in to its possession only after asking for it. Even yet, as our great high priest, He continues, as St. Paul assures us, to intercede for us and so will continue till time shall be no more. It would require more time than is at our disposal to give many examples of how this precept was understood by the Saints. It suffices to say that they were without exception men and women constantly united to God by prayer. That is what made them saints. They realized that upon the fulfilment of this precept depended their salvation. St. Paul was continuously conscious of his sin and consequent peril, and cried out beseechingly to God to keep him in His grace. The saints speak of themselves as of depraved sinners and fickle penitents. St. Philip Neri used to ask his brethren of

1 Crasset, S. J., Med.

2 Ps. II, 8,

the Oratory to pray for him that he might not deny the faith and give great scandal. He used to say, "Lord, beware of me to-day, lest I should betray Thee and do Thee all the mischief in the world." Examples could be multiplied indefinitely, showing that the Saints prayed and prayed continuously, not only out of a holy desire of communing with God, but out of a firm unswerving conviction of its necessity for the working out of their salvation. They well knew that there was never a time when on account of the possession of God's grace, they could release themselves from the obligation of complying with the precept of prayer. Christ, the all-pure, who had no personal need of prayer, prayed to the end of His life. David, the man after God's own heart, fell from grace into adultery and murder. Peter, after protesting his willingness to die for Christ, went out and denied Him. Hence, the meaning of St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians, "Pray without ceasing." (1)

Prayer rightly offered is never fruitless,

1 Matt. VII, 8.

and for this we have the word of God, Himself. What sweet assurance of the efficacy of our prayer is conveyed by the words of Christ, "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you, for every one that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." And again He declares that if we ask the Father anything in His name it shall be given us. What grounds have we then for confidence in prayer? The promise of God, Himself; what an incentive to lay open to Him our necessities, our tribulations; what assurance of obtaining His grace and mercy! Scripture is filled with instances of God's justice being averted through penitent supplication, instances of miraculous intervention of God's power in favor of His servants, who prayed to Him in their necessities. And the same may he said regarding the lives of God's saints.

We read in the second book of Machabees that "When the Jews heard of Nicanor's coming, and that the nations were assembled against them, they cast earth upon their

heads and made supplication to Him, who chose this people, to keep them forever, and who protected His portion by evident signs." (1) Judas and they that were with him encountered them calling upon God by prayers. So fighting with their hands, but praying to the Lord with their hearts they slew no less than five and thirty thousand, being greatly cheered with the presence of God." (2) It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles that "There was a great earthquake and the foundations of the prison were shaken, the doors were opened and the bonds of all were loosed," as the result of the prayer of Paul and Silas. (3) "Paul entering the house of Publius whose father lay sick, prayed for him, laid his hands upon him, and the sick man was restored." (4) It was humble and constant prayer that caused Augustine, the victim of licentiousness and impurity, to become Augustine the Saint and Doctor of the Church. The proud and ambitious Ignatius of Loyola, re-

1 1 Mach. XIV, 15
2 Mach. XV, 26, 27.
3 Acts XVI, 26.
4 Acts XXVIII, 8.

ceiving an inspiration from a little book of devotion, cast himself from his bed of sickness, offered an earnest prayer to God to make him a soldier of the Cross, and became one of the greatest Saints of modern times. God's promise cannot fail and He has given His word that He would both hear and grant our petitions.

That prayer be efficacious, it is necessary that it be offered with devotion, with confidence, and we should pray perseveringly. Many are prone to doubt the efficacy of prayer who pray in such a manner, that God refuses to listen to them. Though it cannot be asserted that God refuses to hear those who are in a state of enmity with Him, yet it cannot be disputed that God leans more tenderly toward the prayer of those who love Him, by keeping His law. "Thou hast set a cloud before Thee, that our prayer may not pass through," we read in the Lamentations of Jeremias. (1) And the meaning of it is that the sins of the people caused God, as it were, to place a barrier between Himself and them. Hence, we are

1 Lam. III, 44.

surer of God's ear when we are His friends, and it cannot be said that God made His promises to His enemies save those whose hearts are disposed to conversion.

The manner of our prayer is a matter of serious importance. We should pray with reverence, realizing that we are addressing our Creator and Sovereign Lord. We should go into His presence fully convinced that we are unworthy to appear before Him, and utterly incapable of lifting our hearts to Him as we should. "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss," says St. James. (1) Hence, our success in prayer depends upon the humility and reverence with which we approach the throne of Grace and Majesty. "God resisteth the proud," (2) and Scripture assures us that He is jealous of the respect which is due Him. We should therefore put aside all other thoughts, when we address ourselves to God, concentrating our minds upon Him and not simply praying to Him with our tongues, when our hearts are far from Him.

1 James IV, 3.
2 James IV, 6

We should pray with great trust. Many pray without fruit because their prayer is unaccompained with confidence. They ask of God with a doubt as to the success of their prayer. "All things whatsoever you ask in prayer believing, that you shall receive." (1) We should go to God as children to an indulgent father, fully persuaded that we will be heard and the favors sought, granted.

We should pray with perseverance. Although Almighty God has promised to hear our prayers, He has not promised to do so immediately. Sometimes to try our confidence, He defers answering our request and that even for a long time. He tests our allegiance by subjecting us to this trial. Sometimes we ask favors that would really form obstacles in the way of our salvation. These, God in his mercy, never will grant, but if what we ask is conducive to our salvation, then God will surely grant the petition, although He may in His wisdom, submit us to a lengthy probation. St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, prayed perse-

1 Matt. XXI, 22.

veringly during eighteen years for the converson of her son, and God rewarded her noble confidence and perseverance, by making her son a greater Saint than she was herself. "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petition be made known to God."(1) "There is no fear of you ever becoming troublesome or displeasing to God by the multiplicity of your requests, * * * all that is requisite is that they should be such as are worthy of being presented to God, and that therefore you should not ask Him for vain or wrong things. As to anything else never fear because they are many or great, for great things are worthy of such a Sovereign. When Bethsabee had a request to make even to her own son, she was careful to say to King Solomon: "I desire one small petition of thee."(2) "But with God we need use no such precautions." (3)

The necessity of prayer, Beloved, is then most obvious, since without it we would

1 Philipp IV, 6.

2, 3 Kings II, 20.

3 Manna of the Soul, Segneri S. J. (Necessity of Prayer).

lack the supernatural help necessary for us to fight our way through the world of sin with all its insinuations, suggestions, allurements and temptations. The struggle for salvation is a tremendous battle. It is easier to conquer nations than to conquer ourselves, and render ourselves secure against the onslaughts of the world and the Devil. Alexander, the hero of antiquity, the most warlike spirit that Greek blood ever produced, was a victim to passion. Julius Cæsar, whose name filled the world, was a slave of vice. Napoleon, destroyer of armies, the subjugator of kingdoms, a man in whom was concentrated the greatest amount of power that was ever individualized in modern times, was enthralled by his own bad qualities. God's heroes are immeasurably nobler than the great ones of earth, their conquests are of an unquestionably higher order. Their victories reached to the very hearts and minds of men, and greater than all this they were masters of themselves. This latter fact explains their success in making captives for Christ's sake. They were, what they were, through

a silent, persistent struggle against the rebellious proclivities of the flesh, the allurements of the world, and the temptations of the Devil, their ever watchful adversary, and the weapon most in use during this warfare was humble prayer. Beloved, how well we know from our experience, the necessity of prayer. We need but consider our oft-proven insufficiency, when left to our own resources in the face of strong temptation. Our duty is clear and unmistakable. "Pray without ceasing," says the Apostle.

Let us endeavor to peep into the abode of the damned. Consider the fact that never through all eternity, shall a single ray of hope penetrate the dreadful gloom of that dwelling-place of God's enemies. O the horror of it! They know that they have lost all that was worth living for and that their terrible mistake is irretrievable. Why are they there? More fundamentally than for any other reason, because they did not pray. "Ask, and you shall receive;" alas, with what hollow mockery do these words resound through the cavernous depths of hell. The time for asking is forever gone.

"Seek, and ye shall find." Yea, damned souls, seek forever and ever, but never shall ye find the slightest ground for hope. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Alas! the portals of God's heart are closed to you forever, secured with the bolts of His justice and wrath.

"Pray without ceasing." Yes, Beloved, beset on all sides as we are with snares, it is meet that we should always pray, not simply in the morning and when retiring, but during the day, and most especially when the powers of hell conspire against us. "Pray without ceasing."

THE NAME OF GOD.

"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." (1)

What is in a name? Beloved, this is not an unfamiliar question. We might answer it fittingly by saying that a name is largely a bubble of the world's transient glory—a bubble purchased most frequently by much sacrifice and labor.

"Why mount the pillory of a book,
Or barter comfort for a name." (2)

Yet, Beloved, there is magic in a name, for it is the talisman which has stirred up all the world's ambitions. The most peculiarly proper attribute of a man is his name, because it indicates his whole personality, individualized, and as distinguished from every one else. When we hear the name of one who is known to us, there is not conveyed to our mind the thought of the bare individual, but rather the individual with certain characteristics, which are (in a

1 Exod. XX, 7.

2 Whittier, To J. T. L.

sense at least), peculiar or special to him, and hence the greater or the more remarkable the individual, for one reason or another, the more full of suggestion is the mention of his name. The name of Alexander suggests the greatness of that conqueror, as it is crystallized in the names of Thermopylae, Thebes, Sardes and Hallicarnassus. Likewise, the name of Cæsar floods the mind with recollections of the conquests of Gaul and Helvetia, with the names of the Rubicon and Pharsalia. And so the names of the great ones of this earth in philosophy, poetry or any other line of distinction, teem with suggestion. The same is true of the names of those, who achieved distinction in the service of religion. The names of Moses, Isaias, John the Baptist, Paul and Augustine need but be mentioned, to know the truth of what I have said.

What shall we say of the name of God? Who shall recount the suggestions that fill the mind at His most blessed Name. The Creator of heaven and earth, the Sustainer of the universe, Infinite Majesty, Power,

Goodness, Justice and Mercy. It is not marvelous, that one of His commandments deals with the reverence for His name, which He exacts under severe penalties, for no affront can be offered to that Name without an attack upon His Divine Person. We know from the pages of the Old Testament, that the Name of God was hedged about with mystery. "Moses said to God: Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them: The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is His name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses: I am Who Am. He said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He Who Is hath sent me to you." (1) And when the name of Jehovah was revealed, such was the sacredness which surrounded it, that even upon the lips of the high priest, its pronunciation was limited. The patriarchs (strange as it may appear), never knew the name of God, because He purposely concealed it from them. "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 'I am the

1 Exodus III, 13, 14,

Lord that appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, and my name Adonai I did not shew them.' '' (1) It seems most reasonable to conclude that the Almighty's motive in concealing from His saints, His Holy Name, was to encircle it with a mysterious sacredness, which would inspire the profoundest reverence.

When God gives a name to a person it must have an altogether special significance, denoting principally the vocation of the individual. Hence the name of His Son must be filled with extraordinary meaning, and in order that the highest possible appreciation and reverence for that name might be realized, it was withheld for four thousand years from the knowledge of men. The prophets were eloquent in their vaticinations concerning Christ and His name, yet they never pronounced the name itself. Holy Scripture declares the incomparableness of the name of Christ. ''God * * * hath given him a name which is above all

1 Ex. VI, 2, 3.

names." (1) Though that name being the name of God is, in large measure, inscrutable, yet for us it has the sweet signification of Savior, Redeemer. The angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." (2) We know, too, the adorableness of that sacred name; for, as the Inspired Word tells us, "At the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God, the Father." (3)

Beloved, from these few reflections it would appear that the instinct of reverence and respect for the name of our Creator and Redeemer should be strongly emphasized in the Christian heart, and that this reverence should be expressed by marks of respect at the pronunciation of the name of God or of Jesus Christ, and by complete abstinence from any use of them that could suggest vain usurpation. The law which demands

1 Ep. ad Philip, II, 9.
2 Matt. I, 21.
3 Ep. ad Philip, II, 10.

reverence for the name of God, has the same sanction as those which prohibit murder and adultery. Since then the Almighty made the prohibition of the vain use of His name a distinct portion of His Decalogue, it is difficult to see how we can offend against this precept without incurring grave guilt and the Divine displeasure. Notwithstanding all this, however, there is no sin half so common amongst Christians, as that of the irreverent use of God's Holy Name. It is a sin that is confined to no particular class, for it is found abundantly among all. Nor is it restricted to any particular period in the lives of men, for it is learned almost with the first articulate lispings, and gray hairs are dishonored by it. You cannot walk the streets of the city without hearing God and Jesus Christ vainly invoked by the little fellow who can have no possible sense of what he says. The school-boy, with a somewhat developed appreciation of its guilt, becomes hardened in the habit of this sin, and the youth and man incorporate disrespect and contempt for God and Jesus Christ into their every-

day conversation. The situation is not less than appalling. The worst feature of this state of affairs is that there is comparatively little public sentiment against this species of iniquity. There are certain phases of guilt, which men hide from one another through shame or some other motive, but to be a blasphemous or profane man, is not regarded as a social disgrace, nor is such a one by virtue of his evil habit looked upon as un-Christian. This is due in great measure to the fact, that at the present time the sense of reverence is seriously blunted. It cannot be maintained, it is true, that the mere utterance of the name of God in surprise or impatience constitutes of itself a mortal sin. But the person, who habitually uses God's name thus and makes no serious effort at correcting his vice, assuredly places himself in a state of constant opposition to a very clear Divine precept. The irreverent use of the same Holy Name, is for the most part, associated with anger and the invoking of God's maledictions upon the neighbor. These circumstances add a large measure of guilt and no doubt often drive the grace of God from the soul.

There is less palliation for this species of sin than for most other infractions of Divine law. Men are forcibly impelled by passion to other sins, as for example, impurity, drunkenness or even theft, but there is no instinct of the human heart that impels a man to break the second commandment of the Decalogue, for the purpose of gratifying an unruly appetite. And though the sin under consideration is one with which we come into constant contact, on account (as I have already said) of its dreadful prevalence, nevertheless, in the vast majority of cases, where it exists as a habit, it is the result of cultivation, or at least of the grossest carelessness in the matter of guarding against it. There is always a peculiar horror attaching to the profane use of the name of Jesus Christ on the part of a Catholic. He is taught most insistently to have the profoundest respect for this sacred name and to manifest this respect by external reverence, and so he has to do violence to his better instincts, and to trample upon many unforgetable lessons, before he comes to abuse the name which is above every name.

The taking of this name in vain has a most acute effect upon pious ears. It is like a shriek of murder in the silence of the night. It inflicts a wound upon the heart of a good Christian, who feels that the sacred humanity of Christ and the blood that was spilled on Calvary, have been outraged. It is hard to believe that any one who will flippantly traduce the name of Jesus has much respect for His sacred person. The two things are not reconcilable.

It is a common characteristic of the saints that they had not only the deepest reverence for the name of Jesus, but it was to them the source of constant sweetness, consolation, help and joy. St. Bernard of Citeaux, writing upon the Holy name, says. "I know not whether you understand the wondrous effects of the name of Jesus, but to me, everything is dry and wearisome without this Divine name. A book in which I do not find the name of Jesus, has no interest for me; a sermon affords me no pleasure unless the name of Jesus is mentioned in it. Jesus is sweetness to my mouth, music to my ears and a glad song

to my spirit." (1) This rapture is not strange, Beloved, for Bernard well knew that the name of Jesus was the foundation of all his hope. He was well aware that the Divine Infant purchased that name by the shedding of His blood in infancy—the first fruits of His passion—indicating, so to speak, the absolute union of that name with the great oblation which was to be our salvation, for it is in that name, nay, solely by that name, that the merits of the Cross are applied to souls. How many of us have any serions notion of what the name of Jesus is to us? It is a shield against the darts of hell. When we are beset with temptation, when the battle waxes fierce and our minds cease to have a clear view of the right, and when evil is upon the point of triumphing over us, the name of Jesus will turn the tide, for it will infuse new strength, vigor, light and hope, and its constant repetition will bring about that unspeakable tranquility and peace that fills the soul after temptation, fierce and insisttent, has been successfully repelled. When

1 Conference on the Holy Name.

in the depths of desolation, which at times lies like a flood upon every human spirit, when all the light seems to have gone out, and the sense of our past sins tells us that mayhap we have forever lost God's favor and that our repentance was not genuine, then the name of Jesus will inspire new courage, for it will suggest infinite compassion and mercy, and it will recall to my mind that one of the reproaches which they cast upon him was, that he was the friend of sinners. I may have been the victim of another's injustice, I may have been cruelly wronged, humiliations may have been heaped upon me through a spirit of hatred or jealousy, and perhaps there is in my heart a spirit of revenge, which is nourished and strengthened by continual reflection upon my wrongs and greivances, and so, the suggestion steals into my soul that I right myself by some act of vengeance. Ah! then it is that the name of Jesus softens the hardness of my heart, as I think of Him, the willing victim of opprobruim, persecution and even death, in the exercise of Divine charity and forgiveness. That name

suggests a life, the contemplation of which makes it possible to observe that precept, which at first view impresses the human mind as something not only difficult but unreasonable. "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." (1) Perhaps some great grief has filled my soul, some terrible affliction that has broken my heart and whitened my hairs, and I am almost angry with God. The thought of the "Man of Sorrows," whose soul was saddened even unto death, whose grief would outweigh the grief of worlds, comes to my afflicted mind, and as I breathe His name in resignation, a peace like the restful hush at eventide settles sweetly upon my soul. Yes, Beloved, the sweet and sacred name of Jesus is everything to us, sweetness, consolation, joy, hope, forgiveness, salvation. "For thy name's sake, thou wilt lead me and nourish me." (2)

In order that these few reflections may be of some profit to us, Beloved, let us enter

1 Matt. V, 44.

2 Ps. XXX, 4.

into ourselves with a view to finding out what offenses we have committed against the name of God and the name of Jesus, either by commission or neglect. Have we been unfortunate enough to contract the evil habit of pronouncing God's name irreverently by thoughtless exclamation, in anger or cursing those about us? Alas, a great many of us will have to plead guilty to one of these charges and some of us to all of them. Have we, furthermore, by our scandal, extended the spread of this sin through committing it before children or those under our care or authority? There is many a father who is responsible for countless offenses of this character by his evil example. With what facility do children imitate parents in evil things, as well as in things good or indifferent! It is quite natural and even unavoidable, for parents are the teachers provided for these little people by nature herself.

And now as to the neglect of the Holy Name. If we look into the history of our grievous falls from grace, we will not find that we were ignominously conquered by

sin, whilst we were sincerely invoking the name of Jesus. We may remember, perhaps, of occasions whereon we called upon that name, when tempted, and yet fell victims to the tempter. If that be so, then the invocation was merely mechanical, it was unworthy the name of prayer. There are souls who call upon God in the time of spiritual combat, but whose wills are not in complete opposition with the gratification toward which the tempter impels them. The sincere invocation of the name of Jesus in the moment of struggle carries with it a guarantee of victory, else the Divine promises are made void. How often have we endeavored to procure help and consolation from creatures, when dejected by sadness and affliction? Many of them are willing to give us what they can in the way of consolation and uplifting, but, alas, how poor they are themselves, even the best endowed among them. It is the name of Jesus that is joy and consolation to the saddened or afflicted heart.

Let us, Beloved, have the deepest possible respect, both interior and exterior, for the name of God and the name of His Christ.

Let us teach this respect to others by example, and (where our position allows it) by admonition and correction. Let us remember, finally, that in every untoward circumstance of life, the name of Jesus must be our refuge and help, "For there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved." (1) "Help us, O God, our Savior, and for the glory of thy name, O Lord, deliver us, and forgive us our sins for Thy name's sake." (2)

1 Acts IV, 12.
2 Ps. LXXVIII, 9.

THE PASSION.

"And I said, 'Ah, Ah, Ah, Lord God, behold I cannot speak, for I am a child!'"—Jeremias I, 6.

If the ancient seer of Israel, Jeremias, son of Helcias, could thus address himself to the Almighty, when from the lips of the Lord he received his prophetic mission, with how much greater reason can I utter the same expressions as I stand here to-night with the task of preaching the sufferings and death of a God. Nevertheless, this task must be assayed, even though unworthily, since we were, indeed, poor followers of the Crucified if we allowed this dread commemoration to go unheeded.

It is a fact worthy of observation that, ordinarily, the mind is apt to consider only the physical aspect of our Savior's sufferings, when reflecting upon His passion and death. This partial view of the dreadful tragedy which closed the earthly life of the Master is most inadequate since, in all probability, the unspeakable agonies of soul

which Christ endured, were far keener and more dreadful than the scourging of His sacred flesh, the thorny crown, or even, perhaps, the crucifixion itself. Hence, we will begin this meditation with the consideration of those sufferings of our Lord which were mental or spiritual. It is perfectly true that every physical injury has a mental effect in a conscious sufferer, and further, that physical pain has a value only in proportion to the power of realization in the individual who suffers, but here we do not consider the mental reflection of physical injury, or the mental distress associated with existing corporal affliction, but rather those agonies of mind which Christ endured before the infliction of any physical injury whatever upon His sacred Person. As Jesus entered the sombre shades of Gethsemane the night before His awful oblation, He began to be frightened and to fear. In that moment He dismissed the mighty supports of His divinity, so to speak, in order that He might abandon Himself to the immolation, and in one terrible flash His human spirit realized the awful proportions of His task.

Note well the fact that the soul of Christ, untouched by sin or coarseness, was most perfectly sensitive, hence, immeasurably more keenly alive to agony than the souls of other men. In that one flash He saw, with cruel accuracy, the ignominy of the mock trial in the house of Caiphas; He beheld Himself clad as a fool in the court of the execrable Herod; He experienced the degradation of His power and majesty as, with prophetic ken, He felt the thorny crown, the weight of the cross and the unutterable consummation. Worse than all this was the realization that He was identified with the iniquity, the depravity, the pollution of the entire human family. He had agreed with the Eternal Father to assume the ragged garment of human nature, and with it the responsibility of every thought and word and deed of rebellion against Divine Majesty, and now, with a rigor fearful to contemplate, the Almighty holds the adorable object of His love to His dreadful compact. When the mantle of sin falls upon Christ's shoulders the Father withdraws Himself and leaves His Son the prey

of an unspeakable agony and desolation of soul. The Lamb of God no longer recognizes Himself, as it were. He, the All Pure, is not only near to sin, but it is upon Him, nay, it seems to fill His every fibre. It is in His heart, which is rent with the passions of jealousy, hatred and lust. It is in His mind, which contemplates the most appalling, the vilest, the most blood-curdling scenes. It is in His soul, from which the sweet consciousness of His Father's presence has fled, and has left there a chaotic void—a horrible indifference to all that is good and holy. It is upon His lips, which utter blasphemies and maledictions. It is upon His hands, which are red with blood of ten thousand murders. It is upon His feet, which are walking recklessly into the haunts of sin. The fearful magnitude of the punishment which awaits Him as THE sinner of the world, appals Him beyond description, and (perhaps worse than all) as His mind travels with lightning speed down the ages, He beholds that the sacrifice He is about to offer amid most ghastly circumstances for the souls of men, will be futile for thousands

upon thousands. He beholds men maddened with passion and frenzy shedding each others's blood, and abandoning themselves to every species of gross and unlawful gratification. He beholds them not only treating His Church and her laws with sneers and indifference, but actually vilifying His own sacred character, and endeavoring to wipe from the face of the earth every vestige of His benign influence.

Torn and racked by these horrible visions His heart faints; He feels (if I may dare speak the word) that the work is of too stupendous a character for His performance, and conquered by fear and anguish, He cries out in supplication to His Heavenly Father that the chalice pass away. The support of the divinity (as I have remarked) in some sense had been removed, and the poor, human soul left to itself was utterly crushed by the awful weight, and such was the excruciating distress of His spirit, that the consequent wild fluttering of His sacred heart beating against His bosom caused the ruby tide of His blood to break through the veins that imprisoned it in its wild flight,

and lo, it stood in great purple drops upon His brow and ran adown His sacred Person. Ah, Beloved, who will convey, even most inadequately, a notion of the suffering of that awful moment? What physical pain, even of the acutest sort, will bear comparison with that commingling of fright, anguish and heart-break?

The collapse of Jesus in the face of it all was but momentary. "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me." But this cry is quickly succeeded by the triumph of infinite charity and sublimest obedience, "My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done," (1) and stretching wide His arms He took into His embrace every detail of that most awful of ordeals. There in the dark wooded depths of Gethsemane's garden, in silence and solitude, He abandoned Himself without reserve to the most dreadful agonies of soul. Alone, for He had left His Apostles apart, bidding them to watch while He penetrated the inner gloom to suffer and to pray, and yet He was not alone, for the

1 Matt. XXVI, 39, 42.

sins of the world were around Him. His, Beloved, was an absolutely vivid appreciation of all the horrible deformity and vileness of sin, a perfect sense of the insult that sin conveys to that Father Whom He loved with a love ineffable, and a flawless vision of all the ravages that sin had wrought upon the souls whom He had come to snatch from the jaws of hell. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." (1) Ah, Beloved, what a world of preaching is conveyed in those words which fell from the lips of Jesus in the shades of the olive grove! Marvelous, indeed, the fact that so many who belong to the household of the faith are so slightly impressed with the mental phase of Christ's sufferings. The dramatic features of the Passion (and I speak with reverence), take forcible hold on the body of the faithful, who easily gather about the cross and gaze up with sentiments of contrition into the face of the dying Savior, but for the most part the broken heart of Christ and His agonized soul are but slightly appreciated.

Let us follow Him now through the rest

1 Matt. XXVI, 38.

of the dreadful ordeal. The traitor betrays Him. Gaze upon that execrable wretch as he sounds the lowest depths of depravity by imprinting a kiss upon the face of his victim, as though he would express in clearest possible fashion the contempt in which he held Jesus' love. The infamy of that act receives its immediate counterpoise in the sublime charity of the Redeemer. "Friend," says He to the Iscariot, "whereto art thou come?" (1) And so He is bound and led away to stand before His own creatures, who are to do judgment upon Him. Note well that in the face of personal danger the fidelity of the apostolic college collapses like a house of cards—for those who had been His daily companions and the objects of His special solicitude, fled precipitously under cover of night, and deserted Him most miserably. Even poor, broken-hearted Peter, who gave some sign of lasting fidelity in the moment of trial furnishes the most contemptible evidence of treason, by swearing that he knew not the Man. The mind is overwhelmed by this general defection, for He

1 Matt. XXVI, 50.

chose these men from amongst thousands, and He lavished upon them spiritual gifts of a very high order. He gave them dominion over the spirits of evil, and their hands had wrought miracles, and yet with a suddenness which is startling they were guilty of a most wretched desertion. What a terrible object-lesson in the fickleness and weakness of the human heart.

From court to court He is conducted, while mere worms of the earth hold Him up to the contempt of the rabble, and finally, condemn Him to an ignominious death. The voices which but a short time since had acclaimed Him a Prophet and had sung hosannas in His honor, now shrieked madly for His blood. Look upon Him as they tie Him to a pillar and lash His sacred Person! What fiendish enthusiasm characterizes the work of those monsters! See how His sacred blood flies about the place. There is blood upon the walls, nay, it flecks the faces and garments of those who stand about drinking in this revolting spectacle. There is blood upon the hands and arms of those who execute this awful infliction upon His tender,

quivering flesh, and behold, He stands in a pool that purples the stones of the praetorium. Look, Christians, upon your God, the innocent victim of a ribald soldiery. Crowned with thorns, clad as a fool, and holding in His hands a reed in lieu of the sceptre of Infinite power, He permits His Majesty to be dragged down into the very mire. Look again, the scene is changed. The sentence of death has been uttered by the pusillanimous Pilate, and amid the howls and jeers of a blood-thirsty multitude the Redeemer takes up the tree of ignominy and starts on the journey towards Golgotha. In order that He might not allow to pass any opportunity of drinking to its dregs the cup of bitterness for our poor sakes, He allows Himself the agony of a meeting with His blessed Mother on His way to death. It would seem almost irreverent to expand upon that meeting. The Son and the Mother, as far as we know, spoke but in glances, but needless to add the eyes of both were eloquent with anguish, with tenderness and with love. The awful consummation is at last a fact. Lifted up in nakedness,

stretched upon the cross, the Messias is slowly dying. The dread sacrifice which is to reopen Paradise to sinners is nearing completion. Hearken to the dripping blood of a dying God. Note the agony depicted upon that wan and bloodless face, attend well to that outcry which denoted the supremest moment of His passion, when deserted even by His Father, He cries out with heartrending plaint, "Deus meus, Deus meus, ut quid dereliquisti me?" "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (1) A victim of the acutest pain ever inflicted upon a human body, a victim of a broken heart, Jesus Christ bows His head and dies.

Beloved, one of the dangers to be avoided in meditating upon the passion of our blessed Savior is that of taking simply an objective view of those awful sufferings. That is to say, on account of the terrible details and circumstances with which we come in contact from the time we go into the garden until we find ourselves gazing up into the face of the dead Christ, we are

1 Matt. XXVII, 46.

apt simply to be impressed with that wonderful picture without learning well the lesson which such a contemplation should convey to our souls. Unless I realize at least in some sort of fashion that my sins were in a measure responsible for the agony in Gethsemane, the cruel scourging, the thorny crown, and the bloody death upon Calvary's altar, then I have in no sense learned the lesson of the Passion. Unless I perceive the necessity of penance for my infidelities, of mortification of my body, as I hear the lash descending upon the shoulders of the Lamb of God, then the scourging at the pillar is meaningless for me. Unless I learn the necessity of chastening my proud spirit by the practice of humility, then the crown of degradation which wounded the brow of my Redeemer has no signification for me. Unless the struggles of Jesus, as He bends and falls beneath the cross, teach me patience and resignation; unless the awful consummation on the hill of Golgotha teaches me, so far as my little mind can know, the value of my soul, the fathomless depths of Christ's

charity, and the mystery of divine condescension, then I have missed the central idea of it all, and I have no part in Christ, I am, indeed, without the fold.

It is not to be marveled at that the saints famished more and more for self-immolation as they advanced in the knowledge of the sufferings of Christ. Their apparent extravagances in the matter of personal penance were only mild expressions of their appreciation of the Savior's passion. Though we may not all expect, personally, to realize the ardor and the transports of the saints, yet may the result of our prayer and adoration to-night be the fulfillment of that which the Lord declares a necessary condition for discipleship: "If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me."(1) We are struck with horror at the thought of that demand for Christ's blood on the part of the frenzied multitude. But, alas, our own mortal sins imply greater infidelity; for the poor wretches who cried out, "Let Him be crucified," for the most part acted in

1 Matt. XVI, 24.

blind obedience to their leaders, and few of them, if any, really believed Him to be the Son of God and Israel's Savior; but we who know Him by faith, and who desert Him for the husks of sin, cry out with immeasurably more malice, "Let Him be crucified, away with Him."

By our mortal guilt we sympathize with every detail of that awful tragedy, nay, more, according to the word of the blessed Paul we endeavor by each new iniquity to re-enact its horrible scenes. Hence, if the guilt of but one mortal sin has polluted the sanctuary of my soul, I have all-sufficient reason to lie prostrate in the dust at the foot of the cross with a broken heart. But alas, my God, my iniquities are without number, save upon Thy dreadful records, and but that I am forbidden to cast sweet hope aside, I should plunge madly into the gulf of despair. The still, cold face of my dead Redeemer is at once my most harrowing accuser and my only hope. As I stand in the gloom at the foot of the cross I feel that my hands are red with His blood, and that I have done that dreadful murder, and yet

divine mercy teaches me that the flowing of that blood affords my only chance of life.

With these few thoughts let us be silent and hearken to the words which Jesus shall address to our sorrowful souls, as we kneel here to-night in devout contemplation of the dread sacrifice which we now commemorate. Finally, let us beg the Crucified to warm our poor, cold hearts with an ardor of perfect contrition for our sins and firm resolve for future fidelity.

THE MISERY OF A LIFE OF SIN.

"You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning." * * * Amen, amen, I say to you, if any man keep my word, he shall not see death forever." (1)

Beloved, it is narrated in the life of St. Francis Borgia, one of the first generals of the Society of Jesus, that as Duke Gandia, he was obliged to identify the body of the deceased Empress Isabel of Spain. She had been a woman of rare physical charm, noted throughout Europe for her stateliness and beauty. So loathsome a mass of corruption had she become in death, that Francis was impressed beyond words, and he learned at once the lesson taught by the decayed remains of royalty, namely, that it was foolish, indeed, to serve a perishable master.

This incident suggests the leprosy that sin spreads over the beauty of the Christian soul, and the misery of those whose spiritual lives are affected with that horri-

1 Joan VIII, 44.

ble malady. It seems well to begin our study of the wretchedness of a sinful life by contrasting it with the state of a soul adorned by the beauty of God's grace. What is the state of grace? Beloved, no better answer to this question was ever framed than that which fell from the lips of Jesus Christ. "If any man love Me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and We will come and make Our abode with him." (1) The soul then in the state of grace is, first of all, an object of special complacency and love to Almighty God. If it is worth while for us to strive for the love of our neighbors and kinsfolk (and none will deny the propriety of this, under proper conditions and within certain limits), what shall we say of the excellence of striving after the especial love of God? When the Almighty looks upon the soul in grace, He beholds not only His image, but that image illuminated by a light from His own Divine countenance, and warmed by His own Divine love; nay, He sees there the conquest and glory of His Son's precious blood, and so

1 Joan XIV, 23.

loves that soul with unspeakable tenderness, and He yearns to possess it in His bosom forever. The soul, in turn, stands not in relation to God, simply as creature to Creator, but really and truly possesses the friendship of God. Marvelous condescension of Divine power, that He should extend the hand of fellowship and friendship to a poor little creature. Yet, such is indeed the fact, "If any man love me, * * my Father will love him." The soul then is united to God by grace in an altogether special relation from which the might, the justice and the majesty of the Divinity are, so to speak, eliminated, for that relation subsists on love. There is something further contained in those wonderful words of the Savior, namely, that the soul in grace is the dwelling-house of the Blessed Trinity. "We will come and make Our abode with him." It becomes the most chosen of temples then, for the indwelling of the Triune God. It becomes in very truth the holy place; it becomes the shelter of Infinite majesty, power, goodness, love. O wondrous triumph of mercy, O marvel-

ous dignity of man's poor, weak spirit! Surely, therefore, grace gives into man's having and holding, all that savors of real felicity here, and the only possible title to a union with God forever.

Let us now turn from this picture of surpassing loveliness to study, in some little detail, the deformity and misery of the soul without sanctifying grace. First of all, sin disrupts all friendly relations with God. "I know ye not. Ye are of your father, the devil." The light has gone out in the soul—it is now an abode of darkness. The warmth of Divine love is succeeded by the chill of spiritual death. Where Father, Son and Spirit sat enshrined, there sits a monster of horrible mein. Where the odor of sanctity and the perfume of virtue made all things sweet, that place is now permeated with the stench of corruption. There still is vitality, but it is like that of the crawling things of night, it knows no light nor warmth. Look at the wretch who carries about this affliction-laden spirit. He is the accursed of God. "If thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God to keep and

do all His commandments * * * all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field. * * * Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb. Cursed shalt thou be coming in, and cursed going out. The Lord give thee dust for rain upon thy land and let ashes come down from heaven upon thee till thou be consumed. And all these curses shall come upon thee and shall pursue and overtake thee, till thou perish, because thou heardst not the voice of the Lord thy God and didst not keep His commandments." (1) Beloved, what a picture of horror do these inspired words convey to the mind, and yet what I have quoted to you is but a small fraction of all those maledictions which God sends down upon those who offend against His laws. It would almost seem as if the bowels of His mercy were closed beyond hope to the transgressor: "Be the heaven that is over thee of brass." Hearken, O guilty soul, to the sentence of the Most High against thee. Sin deprives the soul of every gift that grace brought to

1 Deut. XXVIII.

it; it strips the soul of everything which might in any way entitle it to merciful consideration on the part of God. When grace possessed the soul, the soul was enabled to earn more and more of the Divine favor; it could make its every act something, entitling it to more of God's love, to further beauty and embellishment, but sin paralyzes all the soul's energies, and not only does it deprive the soul of all its past merits, but renders it incapable of meriting; it destroys its power. This monster reduces the soul to a condition of the most abject servitude. It was freed by Christ's redemption, bought from thraldom by the sacred blood that ran adown the wood on Golgotha's hill, but it has voluntarily yielded up that liberty, bought at so great a price, in exchange for the husks of evil. Sin not only robs the soul of this precious freedom, but it robs it of peace. Remorse and the fear of Divine wrath pursue the sinner. In his dreams he sees the writing on the wall that appalled the wicked soul of Baltassar, and when tortured by the pains of physical ill, the sinner's heart sinks within him as he thinks

of death's awful meaning. In silence and solitude conscience wakes in the night and lays the sinner's life open like a book. And Oh, how recollections pursue him like blood-hounds on the scent, and for him there is no peace the while he prefers the dispositions of enmity with God, to the consolations of true repentance. It is true that sinners seem a happy lot as we observe them and come into contact with them, but this seeming results from the fact that we meet them when their attention is distracted from their spiritual diseases. The sinner at times fancies himself in the possession of happiness, but only when under the spell of passion, which is the fruitful mother of self-deceptions. Our passions are like giants. They overleap all the aspirations and resolves of our better and quieter nature. They drive madly towards some wild issue that lives only in their frenzy. How little account does passion take of goodness. When in its fury it sweeps over the heart of man, all appreciation of God's service and self-government fade into nothingness like the soft haze upon a spring landscape driven westward by a sea-born storm.

There is a certain phenomenon in the sinner's life that is mistaken for peace. It is that dark quiet which settles down upon his soul when conscience has been so effectually stifled that its voice is rarely heard, and its appeal, when heard, is very feeble. This is the last stage of the sinner's career previous to damnation. He is then without light, without aspiration, without any desire for anything better than sin.

> "Some, the degraded slaves of lust,
> Prostrate and trampled in the dust,
> Shall rise no more." (1)

Yes, the sinner fancies himself in peace after he has conquered conscience, successfully repelled grace, and gone down into the depths of iniquity. What is the nature of that seeming peace? "I will harden Pharao's heart * * * and he will not hear you," saith the Lord to Moses. Light and opportunity had been given in abundance to the Egyptian monarch, that he might know and obey the command of the Almighty concerning Israel. Persisting in his opposition to the Divine Will, however, Pharao

1. Coplas de Manrique, Longfellow's Transl.

refused to comply and then the grace of repentance was withdrawn. "I will harden his heart and he will not hear you." (1) It is a peace like the slumber of a tired wayfarer who sinks exhausted upon a mossy bank to sleep, the while a poisonous adder hovers by, to sink his venomous fangs into the slumberer's cheek, or like the lethargy of an inebriate voyager, who sleeps soundly on, all unconscious of the horrors of an impending wreck that will consign him to the abyss of the sea. Yes, Beloved, the sinner's peace is like to that ominous calm which, according to the proverb, presages the most violent storm, for the end of that peace is a dreadful awakening amid the horrors of hell.

Our blessed Lord touchingly sets forth the misery of a life of sin in the parable of the prodigal son. "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of the substance that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after the younger son, gathering

1. Ex. III, 21.

all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance living riotously. And after he had spent all there came a mighty famine in that country and he began to be in want, and he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." (1) Beloved, there is a world of pathos in that dreadful story, but it carries with it no surprises. Any man of even slight experience knows something of what follows in the wake of sin. "He began to be in want." He had tried every means of gratification, he had listened to the prompting of every evil desire, and after he had run through the whole gamut of sin, he began to know that he was poor indeed, and that all his satisfactions ended in bitterness. Some one has beautifully said: "We never know how deep our hearts are till we try to fill them with the world." (2) How true is this remarkable saying, and how

1 Luke XV.

2 Father Clifford "Introibo."

poignantly did the poor prodigal realize it. So thoroughly saturated with guilt was he, however, so successfully had he shut out the light of grace from his soul, that though he recognized his need he sought help of creatures and was rewarded by further degradation. He sought relief by sounding the very depths of human depravity. He felt that by casting aside everything that could remind him of his former self, by giving himself over wildly to every species of low gratification; by "filling his belly with the husks the swine did eat," some sort of quietude or satisfaction should fill his soul. The results of his iniquitous course represent three things, want, degradation and infamy. We have used thus far only one portion of the parable, since the theme of our present reflections is the wretchedness of the sinner's lot, and in simple yet most striking fashion the Savior of sinners sets forth that wretchedness.

An inspection of the nature of sin makes it perfectly clear to the mind that the soul who opens her gates to the monster and persistently allows it to dwell within her

sanctuary, must of necessity be the most miserable being outside of hell. We have seen in our meditation on sin that it is the only evil, the parent and origin of all that the world looks upon as evil; that it implies rebellion against God, the blackest ingratitude to His goodness and mercy, and finally the destruction, voluntary and knowing destruction, of the effects of Christ's immolation in our souls. The man who gives himself up to a sinful life, therefore, separates himself from all that can afford him any true happiness in this life, and allying himself to the source of all wretchedness and misery, must necessarily experience both. "Can a man hide fire in his bosom and not burn?" asks the Inspired Word, "Or can he walk upon hot coals and his feet not be burnt?" (1) How can we, under any circumstances, imagine that soul peaceful which is the dwelling-house of blasphemy and maledictions, desecration of the Lord's Day, scandal, impurity, injustice, perhaps murder, a soul which is the hiding-place of lustful and revengeful desires? What

1 Proverbs VI, 27, 28.

suggestion of happiness can exist where flourishes the memory of the broken vow, warnings despised, opportunities neglected and lights quenched? Can the canker of remorse bring rest? Can the anguish of shame or the appalling sickness of despair give joy? What burden is heavier, think you, than a sin-laden conscience? It should not be a matter of great wonder that criminals, whose guilt lay buried in the depths of their hearts, have delivered themselves over to justice, not being able to support the intolerable weight of sin. How many of the suicides that are recorded in the daily journals are the results of the inability further to sustain the misery of sinful lives?

Though Christ holds up to our gaze a dreadful picture of the sinner's state, yet, Beloved, He does not leave us disconsolate, for immediately after showing us that sin can carry us to the last point of degradation, He teaches us a lesson in Divine mercy and compassion. The prodigal, yielding to a signal grace that came to him in the midst of his infamy, said: "I will arise and will go to my father and say to him: 'Father, I

have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.'" How was he received when in the fulfillment of his resolution he returned to the paternal roof? The gospel narrative, Beloved, tells us "that his father beheld him from afar, was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him." And he received him back to his bosom, cleansed him of his filthiness, and put fine vesture upon him, a ring upon his hand and shoes upon his feet" (1) It is difficult to read this narrative without emotion, and there is no portion of the Word of God that shows forth with more striking tenderness the compassion of God for sinners. Why the great rejoicing and festivity on the return of the prodigal? Because the son that was dead is come to life again; he was lost and is found. And so though God withdraws Himself, as it were, from the persistent sinner, and leaves him in the slough of his misery, yet with Infinite patience He awaits

1 Luke XV.

a sign from that unhappy soul, in order that He may satisfy the promptings of His mercy.

Beloved, if upon examination we find that our lives are drifting towards chronic sinfulness, let us be terrified by the contemplation of the sinner's misery. Let us dwell upon the lamentable picture which our Savior draws for us. Be convinced that no exaggeration proceeds from the mouth of Divine Truth. Secure yourselves against this dreadful plight by the constant use of those means of forgiveness and sanctification which, through God's mercy, are always ready and at hand in the Church. If there be some among you who, alas, are estranged from God and His law by iniquitous lives, to these I would say, if you have imitated the prodigal in his sin, imitate him now in his response to that inspiration of grace, which, perhaps, was the last which God would have accorded him in his wickedness. Mayhap some one among you is receiving the last call from sin to grace. What dire consequences will follow its rejection! Say with the prodigal, "I will rise up and go to

my Father," I will return to the embrace of Infinite compassion. With a heart broken with grief for my iniquities, I shall seek the fountains of mercy and strength.

"The eternal life beyond the sky
Wealth cannot purchase, nor the high
And proud estate
The soul in dalliance laid, the spirit
Corrupt with sin, shall not inherit
A joy so great." (1)

1. Coplas de Manrique.

RELIGION AND THE FAMILY.

"The father of the just rejoiceth greatly; he that hath begotten a wise son shall have joy in him. Let thy father and thy mother be joyful, let her rejoice that bore thee. * * * Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her. The heart of her husband trusteth in her. * * * Her husband is honorable. * * * Her children rose up and called her blessed." (1)

A superficial knowledge of the literature of the Roman people is quite sufficient to convince one of how the Roman mind emphasized the necessity of union between the altar and the home. "For our altars and our hearthstones" (2) was their battle-cry. Cicero, addressing his countrymen on the subject of civic duty, particularly accentuates their obligations to religion and the domestic hearth, declaring unmistakably that the success of the state was founded upon normal family life, in which religion is an essential feature. (3) Though the religion in which the Romans believed was idolatry,

1 Prov. XXIII, 24, 25; XXXI, 10, 11, 23, 28.

2 "Pro aris et focis."

3 "De conjugibus et liberis vestris, de aris et de focis vestris discernite."—De offic.

yet their insistence upon its place in domestic life was insistence upon a principle unquestionably true, for religion is the foundation-stone of family life rightly understood. Paganism did not teach them this principle. It was a natural heritage which came down to them from the beginning, and though corroded by error and superstition, it conveyed with sufficient clearness the popular conviction that the family in its normal state was impossible without the supernatural.

One of the great preachers of the last century, Father Agastino da Montefeltro, in a beautiful discourse upon the relation between the domestic life and religion, says: "There is one institution peculiar to humanity which, after religion, is certainly the dearest and sweetest and most fascinating of all. I mean Family Life." No serious mind will gainsay this proposition, for the properly constituted family is the source and cause of by far the larger portion of human happiness. Family life deals with all that is sweetest, tenderest and

purest in the human heart and soul, and in it are cradled the greatness and the nobility of the race.

The foundation of the family life cannot be that subtle, mysterious force called love, which draws two souls together, souls that hunger for each other, and who feel by some o'ermastering impulse that life's happiness will reveal itself only in their union with one another. No, Beloved, this mysterious something may be, and for the most part is, the efficient cause of marriage, which in turn is the physical cause of the family, but family life, the domestic relation, is something quite distinct from the procreation of children. The brutes increase and multiply, yet they have no family life. That life is a result of something apart from the animal in man. It answers to a higher demand of his nature. As the family relation is something which sharply distinguishes the human race from all the rest of the animal kingdom, so its foundation must be sought in something in man which differentiates him from every other being endowed with organic life, and that something is his

rational and immortal soul. The love of the human heart, in its natural condition, is the real foundation of family life, some one may contend. It exercises itself first in selection, from which marriage results, and then it loves the fruit of that marriage with undying attachment, which holds the various members of the family together. Not so, Beloved, for though the love of a mother's heart for her offspring depends not upon religion, that attraction which is generally the cause of marriage carries with it no guarantee of permanency, but (as experience amply demonstrates) is often exposed to the withering blight of inconstancy; yet family life strictly requires that the love between husband and wife be both intense and lasting, for its decay and death rob the domestic relation of an essential feature. A mother's love for her young, no matter how anxious and tender, is no sufficient foundation for the family.

So long as the love of the human heart which draws souls together in marriage remains a merely natural sentiment, it can never be the foundation of the home, but it

becomes that foundation when it is sanctified and elevated by religion, which is the directing and preserving influence of the entire domestic life.

Let us briefly look at the function which religion exercises in the family. When two young hearts are attracted towards each other, religion does not look on as an uninterested spectator. She rather admonishes them of the necessity of wise selection, insisting that they endeavor by every prudent means to find out whether their mutual attachment gives promise of success in bearing the burdens and responsibilities of married life together. It impresses upon their minds the sanctity and greatness of the marriage contract, and it teaches them that it is, therefore, something not to be entered into rashly or without most serious consideration. Religion teaches the man and woman that neither will find perfect satisfaction in the other, by reason of the faults and frailties of each. It will insist that they regard themselves not as each other's judges, but as help-mates, one for the other. Religion will open to their vision

that married life is accompanied with trials and vexations of spirit, but for these it will furnish sustaining power. When, after the dread contract has been made, the intimate knowledge man and wife have of each other's peculiarities of temper and prejudice, and each other's sins and selfishness, there will arise feelings of regret, mayhap of disgust, religion will remind them of the sacredness and solemnity of their mutual promise—"till death do us part"—and will suggest patience, charity and the ministry of helpfulness.

Should the Almighty send little ones to the keeping of these spouses, religion will point out most clearly the parental duties. The mother, unlike the beast of the field, which by a merely natural instinct gathers her young to her bosom, will regard her babes as treasures from God, reflections of the Divine Image. She will look upon those helpless little creatures as rightful claimants of every fond care, and the father shall be the willing and jealous guardian of both his spouse and offspring. When the young mind gives evidence of unfolding, the

parents, who have been formed under the holy influence of religion, will begin the development of the child's spiritual life by sowing the seeds of the knowledge and love of God and virtue, and by inculcating the spirit of docility. Religion will continue to teach them to love, to admonish, to correct and to encourage, and according to their resources, to educate their children, until by this process good characters are developed, who are able to control themselves, and who are capacitated to be helpful to society. These in turn will be fitted properly to enter the married state and to shoulder its great responsibilities. That same sacred influence teaches those children no less clearly their duties towards their parents. It commands them to love, to honor and to obey them, to look upon them as the representatives of the Most High; to succor them in their needs, and to be the consolation of their gray hairs. It teaches them to recognize with sentiments of deepest gratitude what has been done for them, and to requite that service so far as in them lies.

When religion has thus moulded a family, that family is prepared to bear the misfortunes and heart-breaks of life in an incomparably better manner than is the family in which religion's benign and strengthening influence is not felt. When sickness or poverty enters the home that is influenced by religion, though pain is, indeed, experienced, yet its keen edge is very considerably dulled by resignation and hope, and by the knowledge that God's chastisements are not unaccompanied with love. When from the midst of such a family the hand of death snatches a victim, though there be realized a keen sense of loss, yet the bereaved ones are enabled by religion to look up meekly through their tears and say to Him who both giveth and taketh away, "Thy will be done." They know, too, that death is not an irremediable separation, but that their lost one and themselves will be reunited forever in God. Death in such a family leaves no aching void in the hearts of the survivors, for they go with a sweetened sadness to the last earthly abode of their beloved dead, and kneeling around the cross which marks the

spot, they pour out prayerful suffrage that his soul may soon be rested and refreshed.

No one will deny that peace and tranquility can be secured in a home only by the exercise of patience, forbearance, the spirit of forgiveness and charity. These are necessary to counteract the selfishness, irritability and pride which are so natural to all of us, and which, if unrestrained in a family, would shortly precipitate a dreadful condition. They would set father against mother, sister against brother, and child against parent. Experience fully demonstrates that the exercise of the virtues mentioned above cannot depend upon any merely natural or utilitarian motive. Here and there we find an individual who, through natural strength of character, is able to practice patience and forbearance to a marked degree, but a forgiving and charitable spirit whereby our pride is vanquished, comes only from God, and religion alone furnishes any adequate motive for its exercise. It may be said without fear of successful contradiction, that for the vast majority of the human race, the exercise of these domestic virtues without

the aid of religion is practically impossible. Hence, for the general well-being of the family, for the securing of that harmony and tranquility so necessary that any domestic happiness may be realized, religion is utterly indispensable. Though every false system of belief has admitted the truth that religion is essential to the family, it was reserved for the true religion to effect what all the others had essayed in vain, namely, the formation of a good family.

Since the family is the moral unit of society, it follows that the characteristics of society in any given community are the sum of the special characteristics of the families that go to form said community. If, then, the community as a whole manifests respect for God's Truth and the laws of morality, the cause of this respect can surely be found in the bosom of the family. When, on the contrary, religion has lost its influence around the hearthstone, then irreligion will walk abroad in all its ghastliness, leading the way to sensuality and social rottenness.

It is beyond reasonable question that we live in a deeply irreligious age, and it is just

as true that this sad fact has its cause in the irreligious family. The marriage which inaugurates such a family has for its motive lust or some purely material interest. It is entered into in response to some disorderly inclination or some suspicious fascination, and, needless to add, without any serious consideration. Are we not all aware that many marriages are arranged solely with a view to advance one's social position, or to obtain a fortune in this world's goods? Where there is no idea of the holy character with which marriage is invested surely, then, we will not find any serious convictions as to the duties and responsibilities which the state of matrimony imposes. Hence we will not find even a strict regard for the great obligation of marital fidelity, the lack of which regard explains those frequent driftings apart, which are the growth of an adulterous seed. So laden is the atmosphere we breathe with moral contagion, that even among the children of the Church we find some who dare to criticize her unswerving insistence upon the sacredness and indissolubility of the marriage bond. It is but

natural that the children of those unfortunate alliances, to which I have just referred, are devoid of religious sense, and carry on in their turn the propaganda of sin, thereby increasing that ocean of sensuality that threatens to engulf society. It is not surprising that such families are totally unequal to the severer trials of life. In the face of misfortune they seek consolation in self-indulgence, usually in the obliteration of rational consciousness by intoxication, and if, mayhap, the burden of sorrow is extraordinarily heavy, suicide is often resorted to as an avenue of escape. They do not cry out in their distress to the only Source of help, for in their domestic life there is no God. His name, perhaps, is never mentioned there, save in blasphemy and malediction.

Were we to narrow down our reflections to irreligion in Catholic families, unhappily we would have ample matter for consideration. The majority of Catholic marriages are not liable to severe criticism on account of neglect of preparation. Speaking generally, the Church has that hold on her

young people which enables her to secure for them some fitting preparation for the married condition. In spite of this, however, we are confronted with much irreligion in Catholic families, and that irreligion proves a harrowingly destructive force. Some young couples begin auspiciously, but after the advent of a family, grow neglectful of religious duties, assigning flimsy excuses for their conduct. This is particularly true of young mothers. There is no doubt that their duties to babes at times exempt them from the obligation of hearing mass, yet they incline to exaggerate the difficulties in the way of their regularly worshipping God at the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice, and through spiritual sloth they become entirely indifferent. These women seldom rally, but become, for the most part, life-long careless Catholics. The neglect of religion on the part of Catholic fathers is generally attributable to the cultivation of some vicious habit that is incompatible with the regular practice of religion. In the majority of cases that habit is drink. Drunkenness is, of all vices, perhaps, the most difficult to over-

throw, and in a husband and father it is most horror-inspiring, since it not only prevents him from living the life of a Christian, thereby setting an edifying example to his offspring, but it hands down to hapless little ones the heritage of a bad inclination, and in thousands of cases the destructive habit itself.

The children of such parents suffer from bad example and from lack of sufficient incentive to attend to religious duties, and so become, like their parents, careless and indifferent Catholics. Contact with the world makes the boys of these unhappy families the slaves of vice. These poor lads know not the necessity of avoiding temptation because they never received the training from which such knowledge springs. The girls of such families are not prepared for the shocks and suggestions of the world, and though protected to some degree by that traditional horror for the loss of virtue, yet many fall into dishonor and ruin. What a fearful account will irreligious parents have to render for such woeful havoc of souls redeemed by the blood of the Immaculate Lamb of God.

There is another type of Catholic family in which there exists some religious influence, but it is effective only to a slight extent. There is a regard for the obligation of observing the precepts of the Church, which have relation to mass and sacraments, but religion is not in palpable evidence in the home circle. It does not enter intimately into the domestic relation. The religious life of each member is separate and distinct. This state of affairs is immeasurably better than the lamentable state of things upon which we reflected a moment ago, yet it could and should be vastly improved. Would to God that the old family customs of praying together, of attending the Holy Mysteries together, and of kneeling together at the Eucharistic table, still survived. The fact that they are sunk in desuetude is a sign of our decadent religious spirit.

Be assured, then, Beloved, that unless religion be the foundation of the family life, domestic peace and order are quite unattainable. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.(1) "Where it

1 Ps. CXXVI, 1.

lives and flourishes in a family, though there may be those little roughnesses that are known even among the just, yet there exists a confiding, permanent and holy love between husband and wife, a continuous, anxious effort to train children in the way of righteousness, a spirit of love and obedience on the part of children, and the domestic circle is a sanctuary of peace and a nursery of virtue. When religion is absent from the family hearthstone, the curse of God is present, and that curse makes itself felt in all those melancholy ills which mark an unhappy home. If family life in its normal condition is the sweetest and most fascinating institution peculiar to humanity, after religion, surely in its distorted and irreligious form it is productive of more wretchedness, misery and perdition than any other agency.

THE GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY OF MARRIED LIFE.

"Hast thou children? Instruct them and bow down their neck from their childhood." (1)

Dearly Beloved: A careful inspection of that portion of the Liturgy, which is set apart for the marriage ceremony, reveals the fact that though the Church expresses solicitude for the contracting parties and heaps benedictions upon them, yet by far her greatest care is for the prospective fruit of the matrimonial union—the little ones who are to be born into the world. There is nothing marvelous in this, since the procreation of children is the primary end of marriage and upon that procreation depend marriage's greatest duties and responsibilities. According to the mind of the Church, the child is deposited by God in the hands of parents, whose duty it is to care for it with the greatest solicitude and to prepare

1 Ecclus VII, 25.

it for eternal union with its Creator. Hence, there can surely be no greater responsibility than that of parents in their relation to children, and since the Almighty loves a human soul with such unfathomable attachment, it is but logical to conclude that He will demand of parents a harrowing account of their stewardship. If He teaches the lower forms of animal life to care for their young with an assiduity and devotion, which betray something almost like intelligence, could it be possible that He is not immeasurably more concerned with the care and development of little ones made to His Image? No, surely, and in the order of nature, that care and development devolve primarily and most heavily upon those who were instrumental in bringing those little ones into the world. Notwithstanding this great responsibility; notwithstanding the incontestable importance of the business of parents in this connection, there is no sin more common among Christian parents, and no sin more disastrous in its effects, than the neglect of the proper training of the young. It is a sin that does not receive so

much palliation from ignorance as other derelictions of duty, because human nature, independently of other sources of instruction, points out with considerable clearness the duty of parent toward child. Most parents, it is true, train up their children with care as regards the temporal or material side of their development. There is (except among the lowest classes of society) a general tendency in the direction of preparing the young for life, by this or that sort of education, in order that they may become self-sustaining. There is a general solicitude for their health and a pride as to their appearance and attire, but the neglect of the spiritual side of their education is simply appalling.

The first important mistake made by parents in the training of children is the notion that no attempt at educating a child should be attempted before the little one has reached the age of reason. Just as soon as the child's mind begins to open to ideas of any sort, there should be an earnest and untiring effort to communicate to it the idea of God and of the relation existing between

the Creator and the little heart. All this will take an extremely crude and rudimentary form in a very young mind, it is true, but even in that form it is invaluable. The feeble lisping of God's Holy Name, and the inarticulate attempts at prayer, may seem a senseless prattle, but they are an integral part of that training which has its goal in union with God forever. Another most important portion of the child's training in its tenderest years (and one so often neglected) is the inculcation of the idea of submission to parental authority. We offend in this more generally in this country than elsewhere. Mothers, through a mistaken idea of tenderness and gentleness, will indulge the cravings of very young children to such an extent, that they become veritable little monsters. It is most destructive of the will-power of the child, who grows up a victim of his own caprices, and who, in after life, spends many bitter hours that might have been saved him, by the judicious curbing of his inclinations on the part of a fond but wise mother. This training of the young child to the notion of submis-

sion is by no means incompatible with the cultivation of the conviction that the parents are its best and most loving friends. The tender years of childhood call for a combination of gentleness and firmness on the part of parents who, alas, are so often deficient in one or the other of these qualities.

It is most lamentable to find among a gathering of young Catholic children so many who are utterly devoid of that religious instruction, which only the parent can furnish. Every priest of experience has felt heartache at the contemplation of scores of hapless little ones who have reached the age of reason without the ability rightly to sign themselves with the sign of salvation, or to recite coherently the prayer that fell from the lips of Jesus Christ teaching the world how to address the Eternal Father of us all. The parents, who delude themselves by thinking that there is neither obligation or utility in beginning the religious training of a child until it has reached discretion's years, usually neglect that training altogether or carry it forward

so inadequately that it amounts to little or nothing. The father excuses himself on the plea that such work is proper to the mother, since he must attend to the weary labor of material support, and the mother neglects it through lack of conviction as to her awful responsibility.

As years roll on the child advances to that period when his mental faculties demand special attention. The possession of his intellect involves a right to its cultivation, and there is a correlative duty on the part of the parents to secure to the young mind some measure of that cultivation. Education, in its complete sense, means the training of the mental and moral faculties with that amount of attention devoted to the body, which is necessary for the preservation of health. We are not concerned here with the physical aspect of education, but with training of the mind and heart. The moral part of education—the religious element of education, cannot be separated from the training of the intellect without grave danger to the young soul. To separate these two means to disrupt the natural unity

of education. Religious training guides and safeguards the developments of the intellect. The Church, in her solicitude for the souls of her young, has been keenly alive to the truth of what I have just said, and so she dispenses the education of the head while instilling the doctrines of faith and morality. All this is of gravest import in the matter of parental obligation. It is the Catholic parents' duty to see to it, that wherever the opportunity presents itself of affording their children an education such as I have just described, they are in duty bound to avail themselves of such an opportunity. Hence, to put it plainly, it is a duty incumbent upon parents to send their young to the Church school. I am fully aware of the fact that some parents contend for the right to send their children elsewhere for an education, maintaining at the same time, that they can attend to the religious training of their children at home. Such parents place themselves in direct opposition to the mind of the Church, and generally speaking (as experience has amply proven), are unfit to supply what the

Church demands for her little ones in the way of religious knowledge. Countless souls have been lost to the Church by parental contempt and indifference to her solicitude in the matter of Christian education. It has become the fashion, in certain parts of the country, to criticise the parochial school system for inefficiency. Many, wise in their own foolish conceits, will assure us that the Church school compares unfavorably with that of the state. These criticisms and judgments are simply the results of a hostile condition of mind, and rarely come from those competent to pronounce an opinion on the matter, and even were these strictures not without some foundation, it should be constantly borne in mind that the invaluable religious and moral training of the parochial school outweighs every other consideration.

There exists a notion in the minds of a large contingent of parents that when boys and girls arrive at a wage-earning period, and are, therefore, able to bring a few dollars weekly to the support of the home that they are entitled, on this account, to a largess of

liberty, which belongs properly to persons of mature age. A foolish mother will tell you that her boy works hard all day, and that he needs recreation at night and so, although he may not have reached his seventeenth or eighteenth year, he is free to leave the parental roof and go where he lists, until the night is far spent. The father may be alive to the danger that encompasses his boy, but is frequently too slothful or uninterested to manifest any concern. How many fathers and mothers sitting before me now realize with bitterness of heart how they have been guilty of the ruin of a boy, who in childhood gave such fair promise. Yes, Beloved, the boy, who is left free to drift with the tide at night, becomes an easy victim to vice of every description. With the fire of youthful passion burning within him and with no restraining influence, an alluring world that attunes its fascinating music to the disorderly cravings of his poor young heart, easily leads him captive, debauches all his moral energies and leaves him a drunkard or a libertine or both. What has been said

of boys applies with due proportion to girls. Mothers too often feel called on to allow a certain dangerous and often fatal liberty to their daughters. They exercise no surveillance over the companionships and acquaintances which their girls form, and they are particularly guilty in their indifference to the characters of the young men with whom these young persons take up. During what is commonly termed the courtship period, when the solicitude and watchfulness of a mother should be ever active and alert, foolish mothers will abstain from concerning themselves, for fear very often of interfering with a daughter's prospects in life, when that lack of interest is sometimes, nay often, the cause of dishonor to the girl who might have been saved by maternal care and vigilance.

The failure properly to exercise the parental prerogatives is very often not confined to mistaken notions of the liberty that should be accorded a child or to a stolid indifference to his waywardness, but that failure includes all the horrors of vicious example. As example is the most forceful teach-

ing for good, so there is nothing so thoroughly destructive of virtue in the young as bad example on the part of parents. It not only permits the growth of evil habits in youthful souls, but it invites and encourages their cultivation. It is an almost overpowering force that compels the young heart to wrong-doing.

We hear a great deal nowadays of the obsoleteness of the old methods of punishing and correcting children. The rod is termed a relic of barbaric times, and that in the present enlightened age it must be supplanted by moral suasion. Beloved, human nature is not differently constituted now from what it was in any former age, nor can it be maintained for a moment that we are more civilized than we were a century ago, when the rod was looked upon as a proper means for the punishing and reforming of the young. It is beyond the pale of legitimate controversy that obedience and respect for authority were virtues which abounded then among the young far more generally than they do to-day. The word of God insists upon the use of the rod in

producing good conduct and right-mindedness in children, and surely the so-called wise ones of this pretentious and inflated age, have no keener insight into the needs of human nature than the Holy Ghost. "He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors. A horse not broken, becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way and he shall make thee afraid; play with him and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. * * * Beat his sides while he is a child lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee." (1) These, Beloved, are the words of inspiration and their meaning is surely unmistakable. If disobedience, untruthfulness, disrespect and general waywardness in children are not met with drastic punishment they grow rapidly into strongly rooted habits and reduce young souls to a condition of moral help-

1 Ecclus XXX, 1, 8, 12.

lessness. How foolish the parent, who thinks he serves his child's best interests, by allowing his sins to go unpunished. Who will count the broken hearts of fathers and mothers who have only awakened to their folly, after sons and daughters had been hopelessly ruined by criminal indulgence of their faults. It should be observed here that punishment by the rod, like any other form of parental correction, should be administered with the proper motive and with due moderation. Many parents administer severe chastisement not out of a sense of duty, but to satisfy their own anger. This, far from being the fulfilment of a duty, is an act of vindictiveness and brutality. The parent who meets the fault of a child with vituperation and profanity is a teacher of evil, and invites his child, as it were, to despise him and hold him in contempt.

There is another feature in the parental work of training children, which is rarely insisted upon, yet it is a feature of primary importance. I mean the cultivation in the young heart of a love for home. It is incumbent upon a parent not only to subject

his child to a discipline of both mind and body, but also to furnish him with means of relaxation and recreation, and these means should be found in great part within the domestic walls. The reason why a great many young folks have no love for home, and are habitually given to leaving the parental roof, nay more, of spending as little time beneath it as possible, is because home is rendered unpleasant by the severity, gloom and moroseness of a father, or because there is no effort on the part of the parents to make their home attractive. Young folks are bound to seek amusement, and if it is not furnished at the fireside, they will seek it abroad, and when abroad they will not be judicious in the selection of their recreation. When home is a place to which they turn with eagerness and pleasant anticipation, when conditions are such that they can invite their young friends to share their domestic relaxation, then countless grave dangers are avoided in the way of occasions of grievous sin. I do not mean to infer that young folks always should be cloistered within the walls of their houses.

This would be both abnormal and unhealthy to both mind and body, but I would insist that a considerable portion of their free time should be spent in the domestic circle; and in order that this may be effected, it is necessary for parents to be alert to the duty of doing everything in their power to make home agreeable. Some fathers act as though their children were their natural enemies. These wretched men inspire their young with no love or respect, but simply with servile fear. "Be not as a lion in thy house," says Holy Writ, "terrifying them of thy household." (1) Children of such fathers look forward with pleasure to the day of their emancipation from parental tyranny.

Another issue of moment in the matter of parental duty is the taking into serious consideration the special talents and legitimate inclinations of children. When God gives a special talent, the bestowal carries with it a right to utilize the gift, and since young folks generally depend upon their parents for the developing of any special

1 Eccl. IV, 35.

faculty, there is some sort of obligation on the part of parents to render what aid they can. Lack of interest on the part of selfish and indifferent fathers and mothers, where there was opportunity to encourage and aid a worthy ambition in a child, has often resulted in disaster. There is many a shiftless good-for-nothing walking the streets to-day because he was denied an opportunity in youth. There are many dismal failures in life, owing to the fact that the possessors of God-given abilities were never encouraged to develop and utilize them. It must be confessed that considerable skill and prudence must be brought to bear in this matter in order to distinguish a real talent, or a well-founded inclination in a special direction, from mere childish whims that change with the hour. As on the one hand, it is dereliction of duty in a parent to take no consideration of the special gifts that God has bestowed upon his children, so on the other hand, it would be thoroughly destructive of a child's character to take serious account of his every fancy.

Beloved, there is hardly any subject upon which God's priest could address you

that rivals in importance the present theme. You who are parents ask the Almighty for a correct realization of your duties. The insistence of the Inspired Word upon the right performance of your duties towards those whom you have brought into the world, makes it thoroughly clear how strict an account the Lord God will require of you. If, mayhap, you have erred in this extremely grave matter, be up and doing for the correction of your mistakes, begging of the Lord help to right what is amiss. You, who are at the initial step of married life, prepare your souls against temptations to remissness in parental duty. Remember that the most fundamental part of the spiritual training of your little ones is in your hands and you cannot delegate it to another. Avail yourselves of every opportunity of securing to your children a good, sound Christian education. Train them well in the way of righteousness, and above all teach them constantly by your good example. Pray for them daily, for this, too, is an important part of your parental duty. Beseech the Almighty to strengthen your

hands for the performance of your work. Beg Him to keep those He has given you in the path of goodness, to lead them from the snares of the evil one, and to fortify their hearts against temptation. "He that instructeth his son shall be praised in him, and shall glory in him in the midst of them of his household." (1)

1 Ecclus XXX, 2.

RESPECT FOR PARENTAL AND CHURCH AUTHORITY.

"Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee." (1)

"If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." (2) "Obey your prelates and be subject to them, for they watch as being to render an account of your souls." (3)

Beloved, civilization to-day is quivering to the reverberations of the sullen roar of the French Revolution. That monstrous effort at national suicide constituted the gravest attempt at the demolition of all authority that the history of the world reveals. The annals of the world's peoples teem with narratives of the overthrow of dynasties, of the forcible substitution of one form of government for another, but the most patent feature of the revolution of 1789 was a popular craving for the destruction of all authority, for the

1 Ex. XX, 12.

2 Matt. XVIII, 17.

3 Heb. XIII, 17.

obliteration of the name of God, for a season of bloodshed, lawlessness and horrors of every description. That craving was gratified to the letter. That fearful upheaval did not begin and end with the French nation, for it contaminated to a dangerous degree the mind of every people in Europe, and it inaugurated one of the most restless centuries of the Christian Era. The restlessness of the nineteenth century had its chief expression in impatience of the constituted governmental authorities. It was a century productive of socialistic and anarchistic theories. The contagion was carried to this country and its germ found many fertile spots on our soil, so that even now we are (so to speak) trembling on the verge of a precipice. This evil spirit, which had its birth in France, has not confined itself to the public life of nations, but it has found its way to the very sanctuary of domestic life, for respect toward parental authority has been diminished alarmingly during the last generation. It is generally conceded, however, that here in our own land there is less regard for the authority

of parents than elsewhere throughout Christendom. This may be readily explained by the fact that living under institutions which afford liberty in such abundant measure, the popular mind becomes intoxicated and fancies that the imposition of restraint even of a most necessary character is an encroachment upon that freedom, which is our birthright.

Beloved, no matter what the age and the world may encourage or allow in this matter now under our consideration, we must be guided by the Word of God and by the Church, the organ of His Revelation. The world will tell you that in that evolution which is a universal phenomenon our views have become obsolete and that though authority parental or other must needs receive a due measure of reverence and respect, nevertheless, the liberty of the individual is the watchword of the hour. The Inspired Word sets forth with striking emphasis the necessity of unquestioning submission on the part of children and warns parents of the evil that will follow their neglect to exact obedience. "Give thy son his way

and he shall make thee afraid. * * * Give him not liberty in his youth." (1)

We will not concern ourselves here with the obedience of small children, for the simple reason that its existence or non-existence depends almost absolutely on the performance or neglect of parental duty. Our object here is to consider the sin of disobedience and disrespect in young folks of a more responsible age. It should be insisted on that God takes, as it were, a special interest in the precept, whereby He commands that we honor and obey those, by whose instrumentality we are in the world. With respect to the other precepts, we find here and there in connection with their promulgation the expression of some terrible sanction, but with respect to this commandment the Most High held out, as it were, an inducement to encourage us in its observance. He attaches to the words of command the promise that obedience should be rewarded, even in this world, by material blessing. "Honor thy father and thy mother that thou mayest be long-lived upon the land which the Lord

1 Ecclus XXX, 9, 11.

thy God shall give thee." We find upon reflection that the action of God in this matter is not marvelous, for the reason of all that respect and obedience which we show to our parents is because they represent God whose place they fill in our regard, and as in His wisdom He has inseparably combined the relation of parent and child with the tenderest affections of the human heart, in accord with this providence, He tempers His precept with something which accentuates His Paternity and the love for us which is inherent to it. We must not lose sight of the fact, however, that though the Almighty makes a promise of even temporal beatitude as a reward for the keeping of this portion of His law, He does not omit to tell us in sundry places of Holy Writ, that He will visit its neglect or breach with curses.

The obligation of obedience and respect for parents, then, has its origin in the solemn command of the Almighty and the contemning of that command involves the malice of rebellion against God. This rebellion is a mortal or a venial sin, according to the character of the irreverence or diso-

bedience committed. There is more depravity of heart required for grave and habitual disregard of parental authority than for almost any other sin which may be mentioned. I am aware of the fact that the theologians teach, that in point of actual gravity, this sin is exceeded by some other infractions of the Divine Law, yet the fact remains that the sinner, who habitually and gravely offends against the Fourth Commandment, is one who has succeeded in practically eradicating the finest and tenderest feelings of the human heart. He must become a sort of moral suicide before he becomes habituated to this species of guilt. We do not speak here of those slight outbursts of impatience and insubordination that have most probably marred the lives of most of us, but rather of those acts which are unmistakably grave infringements of the Divine Law. Nature, herself, though weakened and corrupt, affords help and aid in observing this precept, since she fills us with such an unquestioning love for father and mother. The world at large, though irreligious and sinful, brands the man, who

is known to have treated with contempt those who brought him into the world.

Besides the malice of rebellion against God and violence to the finest sentiments with which He has adorned the human heart, sins against filial piety involve nameless ingratitude. Let us suppose the case of a young man who rebels against parental admonition, despises parental advice, ignores parental commands and treats his parents with positive marks of disrespect. Let us fathom (if such a thing is possible), the ingratitude of this young sinner. The mother, against whom he sins so flagrantly, brought him into the world at the expense of excruciating agony, but when he was born she forgot all her pain, for at once she began to love him with a mighty love. During the years of helpless infancy, her affection, her hope, her interest and her anxiety were centered in him. How diligently she watched his sleeping and his waking hours. She knew no care of self when his comfort was at stake. How her heart throbbed between hope and despair when his little life was imperiled by

sickness. How it pulsated with joy at his recovery. He was her pride when he grew from infancy to boyhood and her wondrous love saw charms in him that the world could never discover. His selfishness she condoned and all her corrections were tempered with love. Poor soul, she willingly deluded herself into the notion that his acts and words of disobedience and disrespect were not meant, and she persuaded herself that his heart was lacerated by the memory of them. Mystery of nature! the revelation of these faults have caused no diminution of her love, but have only made it more anxious. He has grown from boyhood to youth and now stands on manhood's threshold. She is broken-hearted at his waywardness, but never gives up hope of his reformation. She admonishes, she entreats, she loves more intensely than ever. He goes forth into the purlieus of the city by night and as the hours chase each other on, her dread of possible ill to him makes her head feverish and causes her heart to ache. Does she lie down to rest? Ah no, Beloved; with straining ears she sits at a window, awaiting the

sound of his footstep, and tells her beads at the midnight hour, begging the Mother of Mercy to care for the wayward boy. When at last he comes and greets her admonition with words of bitterness and, mayhap, malediction, poor heart, she takes no offence, but rests her weary head upon her pillow, thanking God that her child is safe at home.

Ah, Beloved, who will measure the ingratitude of that monster? Is he not prepared for any act of villiany and degradation? Is there any iniquity from which he would surely recoil in the presence of strong temptation? What heart is harder than that on which the tears of a mother's love make no softening impression? It is true that I have considered an extreme case, but Beloved, it is a type whose name is legion. Sins of children against parents are not confined, of course, to those which are aimed directly against the mother, but on account of the fear which the strength of a father inspires the offenses against his authority are not so external, yet the interior sins of disrespect and contempt are recorded by the Searcher of hearts. The coward, however,

who hesitates not to disobey and disregard his mother, will readily take advantage of a father's helplessness to heap disrespect and irreverence upon him. Though the ingratitude of sins against the mother impresses us more readily than that which characterizes the sins against the father, yet the latter is not less real. What is it that often causes the hair of the father of a family to become prematurely gray? What furrows his brow and bends his once stalwart form? Beloved, it is the wearing toil and anxiety to secure to his offspring temporal well-being. And do you suppose that because he is a man, he has no heart to feel the rebellion and disrespect of unnatural children? Boys are greater offenders than girls against the duties they owe to parents, yet the latter are by no means guiltless. Their acts and words against filial piety may not equal in grossness the sins of their brothers, yet they are equally as guilty, since a girl must do great violence to her own natural delicacy and sensitiveness in order to practice wilful disobedience and irreverence.

Parents are not always worthy of their high vocation, nay more, their lives may be sadly out of accord with the Commandments of God, yet this fact does not liberate the young from their filial obligations. When amid the thunders of Sinai, the Lord demanded honor for father and mother, He did not qualify His mandate, by insisting that we obey and reverence only the worthy parent. It is at times most trying to fulfil one's duty in the face of distressing faults on a parent's part, yet nowhere in the Inspired Word or in the teaching of the Church can we find that a father's or mother's dereliction of duty affords the slightest dispensation from the practice of filial respect.

Let us come now to the consideration of the submission which we owe to the Church. It is most difficult to understand how one can read the New Testament without being convinced that Christ not only established a Church, but that He invested it with an abundance of power. He made that Church the teacher and ruler of all nations. When He sent His first priests into the world, He

declared that He sent them as the Father had sent Him. His own words teach us with perfect clearness how He was sent. "All power," says He, "is given to Me in heaven and on earth." (1) It was, therefore, with a plentitude of power that He sent them to teach the world. Furthermore, He identifies Himself with them, declaring that to refuse them submission was to rebel against Himself and against the Father who sent Him. "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me." (2) "Obey your prelates and be subject to them," (3) says St. Paul, and again, "He that will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." (4)

These words could be reinforced by many more from the Inspired Volume to prove to any unprejudiced mind that the idea of Church authority is fundamental in the New Testament. And in truth an appeal to

1 Matt. XXXVIII, 18.
2 Luke X, 16.
3 Heb. XIII, 17.
4 Matt. XVIII, 17.

reason is quite sufficient to satisfy the reflecting mind that the Church could not be the guide and teacher of mankind, unless she were invested with a large measure of power to command.

The independent spirit of the age, Beloved, has had its evil effects, not only in our public and domestic life, but also in the Church. The Spouse of Christ does not receive from her children to-day that whole-souled, generous submission that the faithful of former ages gladly offered to her. I do not speak of that spirit of criticism, which exists among many intelligent and faithful Catholics, by the exercise of which they discuss this or that line of external policy that is adopted by the rulers of Christ's Kingdom on earth. It cannot be maintained that respectful criticism of actions or policies, more political than religious, could ever constitute disloyalty to the Church, except in the minds of bigots, of whom we have an unfortunately large number in the Church. The qualified submission to which I have referred expresses itself in a querulous spirit that is impatient of the Church's exercise

of legitimate power. Catholics, who are not specially devoted, become infected by the threadbare calumnies of our ignorant adversaries, who sputter about ecclesiastical tyranny and oppression. These children of the Church, though not really disloyal to the point of actual infidelity, do not possess the Catholic spirit and hence become easy victims to a greater or less extent to the rebellious spirit of the age of which I have spoken. Perhaps a more practical way of studying this spirit of opposition to the authority of the Church would be to look at the disregard of many Catholics towards the solemn laws of the Church. I am perfectly aware that many who are neglectful of her precepts are willing to profess belief in and submission to her authority. Yet how can the man who neglects the hearing of Mass, the laws of fasting and abstinence, the law requiring the reception of the sacraments, the law requiring material support for religion and its ministers, how can that man, I say, be totally free from a spirit of insubordination and disregard of the Church's authority. Again, we find in many parishes

a spirit of sedition against a pastor, who has offended members of his flock, either by adopting a certain line of action in the administration of his parish, or by refusing to acknowledge these folks as entitled to a ruling voice. They straightway lose sight of the ecclesiastical authority vested in him and of the obedience which they owe to him and become rebellious. Frequently they make their rebellion effective by cutting off their material contributions and by injuring their pastor's efficiency, through injurious criticism. Sometimes the evil disposition of the malcontents goes so far as to form divisions in a congregation, thus diminishing a priest's authority so as to paralyze the mission of the Church in his parish. These persons are surely rebels against the authority of the Church and their Catholicity is of a very feeble character. It is expedient to observe here that the uncharitable discussion of ecclesiastical persons constitutes not only a sin against Christ's law of love, but also an offense against the respect that as Catholics we owe to every consecrated minister of God. The evil that is done to religion

by the unrestrained discussion of the characters of the Lord's annointed is enormous, since there is hardly anything that more successfully impairs their efficiency as ministers of Christ. Greater sanctity is required of them than of the lay faithful, by reason of their consecration, which makes them the dispensers of the mysteries of God, yet, when they fall from their high estate, or when their faults are foisted upon public notice, it should be borne in mind that they are so identified with the Sacrifice which they offer and the Sacraments which they administer and are still so filled with the power of the priesthood that to circulate their misfortunes is to injure religion and to show irreverence and disrepect to the authority of the Church. "Obey your prelates and be subject to them."

"Honor thy father and thy mother." Let this precept sink deep into the hearts of the young. Love, honor and obey your fathers and mothers from the depth of your hearts. Love them with a true, filial affection. Give external proofs of your love by taking delight in their company, by anticipating their

wishes and by repressing every temptation to show them the slighest disrespect. Imitate the example of the youthful Tobias, whose persevering fidelity to the Fourth Commandment, caused his parents to call him the light of their eyes, the staff of their age, their hope and solace. Remember that no amount of filial devotion will ever fully repay the debt of gratitude which you owe to them. "Honor thy father and forget not the groanings of thy mother." "Remember that thou hadst not been born, but through them." (1) Never lose sight of the special insistence of the Almighty upon this precept, and ponder well that the Son of God did not teach us the observance of this command so much by word of mouth, as by becoming subject to His own creatures. Omnipotence in bonds for our edification! "He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them." (2)

Let us never forget that we are children of the Church by a special grace of God. We have been chosen from amongst mil-

1 Ecclus, VII, 29, 30.

2 Luc. II, 51.

lions and not because of any merit of our own. We are, therefore, objects of God's special selection and favor. Therefore, let us humbly acknowledge the Lord's wondrous dispensation of mercy in our regard, by an unquestioning submission to the Church which He has constituted our teacher, guide and ruler. Put aside all thought of personal independence when it is question of the Church. We are her children, she is our mother, we her subjects, she our queen. Honor her priests, for they are the apple of the eye of God. Consider not their failings. For these they must render a dreadful account, which is none of your affair. Be loyal to the Church at every point. Never be ashamed to own submission to her. Make no apology for her since she is the fair Spouse of Christ. Be penetrated with the knowledge that since the Lord has gathered you within her fold, upon your fidelity and obedience to her depends your eternal welfare. "He that heareth you, heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me."

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE.

"This is a great sacrament: I speak in Christ and in the Church." (1)

Dearly Beloved: Such being the idea of the Apostle concerning that institution upon which the social fabric depends, what shall we say of those appreciations and views of it which we meet with on every side, in a country where Catholics find it so difficult, nay, almost impossible to keep the soul free from the contagion of misbelief and moral rotteness. The vast majority of our countrymen have no conception of the sacramental sanctity and dignity of the marriage bond. The law of the land freely sanctions adulterous contracts. "Surely," says a learned writer of the day, "it is only too evident that Protestantism has done its work thoroughly; that it has first rationalized the notion of marriage and robbed it of all its mystical and spiritual import; then secularized what was a sacrament of the Gospel,

1 Eph. V, 32.

and betrayed it into the hands of Cæsar, and by these means has finally succeeded in profaning and degrading an institution on whose elevation and purity the whole fabric of true civilization depends." (1)

It is because then of the great importance of matrimony itself, and because of the evils which surround it, especially here in our own country that it is necessary for us to consider most carefully and in detail the preparation required on the part of those who contemplate entering the married state. Young folks nowadays enjoy so much dangerous freedom in the matter of association that a large number of the marriages of the present time are contracted injudiciously and eventuate most unhappily. The fact that in matrimony a man and woman pledge themselves to each other, presumably for life, of itself makes necessary the most careful reflection by way of preparation. This preparation has to do primarily with the matter of selection. This must be considered under several heads, to each of which we will give careful attention. Let us sup-

1 Tyrrell, Hard Sayings, A Great Mystery, Page 242.

pose the frequent case of a young couple who have met by some chance, and who at once become infatuated with each other. It is called, commonly, love at first sight. In a foolish haste they bind themselves to one another, and even enter immediately into the dread contract. Their knowledge of each other is of the slightest, most insufficient character. Their love for each other has been submitted to no test whatever, and when it is too late they begin to realize that it was all a piece of monstrous folly, and so they become indifferent toward each other, then conceive for one another an aversion, and finally either drift apart or live lives of misery and bitterness, from which marital infidelity is often not disassociated.

Though the business of courtship or company-keeping, as it is ordinarily named at present, is not without danger, yet it is a strictly necessary preparation for marriage. I am fully aware that certain preachers deny this, and would have us believe that all courtship should be condemned by reason of the dangers associated with it. This teaching, however, is not founded upon good

judgment or a proper view of life's experiences. We will consider farther on in this discourse features which must mark courtship, but at present we are considering only its necessity.

A young man and a young woman have no business to engage themselves to one another without as complete knowledge of each other, as the use of prudent means will procure. It happens that a young girl falls in love with a young fellow without having made the slightest inquiry as to his personal character, and on the strength of their mutual regard she becomes engaged. She finds out subsequently that his moral character is open to serious suspicion; she discovers that he has an inordinate appetite for intoxicating drink; that he is remiss in the matter of attending to religious duties. These discoveries, however, she makes only after she has become fascinated with him, and has solemnly pledged herself to marry him. Her better judgment will warn her against marrying such a man, but her love outweighs all her better judgment, and she lays to her soul the flattering unction that

by marrying him she can reform him. Ah, what blindness. Matrimony was not instituted by God as a reform school, and though we may all be cognizant of cases, where matrimony did actually effect what appeared at least to be reformation, a girl takes harrowing risks in marrying one whose life is habitually out of tune with the demands of Christian life. The young man who has fallen in love with a young woman, whose name he subsequently finds out is none of the best, upon whom a well-founded suspicion rests, runs still greater risks if, in his temerity, he is willing to take her for his companion and his chief support in life, and for the mother of his children, because though matrimony at times does effect the reformation of a man, the cases where it thus acts upon a woman are so rare that they merit no consideration in this connection. It is the object of the period of courtship, then, to find each other out (if I may be allowed the expression), to discover each other's faults, as well as each other's virtues; to learn each other's dispositions, prejudices and temperament,

All this knowledge is strictly necessary to make an intelligent and prudent marriage, and it should be obtained before any engagement is entered into. Such acquaintance, when reinforced with the advice of parents and confessor, will be of invaluable aid in determining the most important problem that confronts a young life. We are dealing with a case, in which it is not only allowable but most expedient to practice a sort of selfishness. A young man or woman about to enter the married condition should realize that the person who is to be his or her companion should be fitted to share the duties and responsibilities, as well as the joys and happiness of that state, and that such a helpmate be prospectively a fit parent, guide and exemplar for little ones. That person alone, therefore, has any solidly probable assurance of future success and happiness in married life, who determines to shun companions of inferior character or suspicious morals and who determines to be satisfied only with the very best possible helpmate. Many will answer to all this, that since love is an affair of the heart and

not of the head, so since marriage follows ordinarily in the the path of love, it cannot be circumscribed with all these prudential considerations. It is undoubtedly true that love and in consquence marriage are largely affairs of the heart, but not to the exclusion of the intelligence with which God has blessed us. Marriage, as God intended it, is not merely a carnal union, but principally a union of souls, and its final cause or motive is not to fill the earth with animals "after the manner of dogs," as says the illustrious Augustine, of Hippo, (1) but to fill heaven with saints, to multiply bodies for the sake of souls." (2) Hence we cannot think seriously of marriage without concluding the necessity of the most prudent, the most cautious preparation. Marriage is an affair of the heart, but the heart in this, like in every issue of life in which it plays any part, must be directed and controlled by reason. At the present day the Catholic Church alone stands seriously for the sanctity, the dignity and the solemnity

1 "More canino" St. Aug. De bono viduit.

2 Tyrrell, "A Great Mystery."

of the marriage relation. The sects of Protestantism profess a religious regard for marriage, but their playing fast and loose with the marital bond, and their sanction of adulterous unions after divorce demonstrate, beyond serious doubt, that their profession is, for the larger part, a mere semblance of respectability.

So far, we have insisted that a young man or woman should utilize the days of courtship for arriving at a better knowledge of the moral make-up of the individual who is to be chosen as a fitting life companion, or rejected as undesirable. But there is another consideration besides the morals of the individual, which is of primary importance, and that is religious profession. Let us put the matter clearly. No Catholic should allow an acquaintanceship with another to mature into courtship, if that other individual does not belong to the household of the Faith, unless there is solid ground for the belief that the non-Catholic party will seek admission into the One True Fold. Again, no Catholic should engage to marry one who professes other

than the Catholic Faith. I am sure that these two propositions will meet with hostile criticism, and that facts may be quoted with a view to invalidating them; yet, Beloved, they express simply the mind of the Church, which is our teacher and ruler. Some may argue that since the Church permits the union of Catholic and Protestant in marriage, such a marriage may not readily be condemned. The Church allows the mixed marriage with a heavy and an unwilling heart, and only when pressure is brought to bear upon her. The vast majority of matrimonial alliances between Catholics and those outside the Church eventuate badly, and the leakage to the Church through them is simply startling. The fact that in a certain locality there have been a number of such unions, from which no damage to religion has resulted, and from which, on the contrary, the Church has gained accessions, in nowise militates against the wisdom of the general law. If the case is one in which both Catholic and non-Catholic parties are devoted members of their respective churches, the non-Catholic will feel, naturally, and

from his point of view justly, that to expect him to give over to the Catholic party the entire religious education of his prospective family, is unfair and against his conscience. He may submit for the love of his wife, but he chafes under such an arrangement. It cannot be said that his objection is unreasonable, for though adhering to a false faith, he may be thoroughly honest, and therefore living according to his lights. There may come a time when he will repudiate his promise and claim a share in the spiritual education of his children, some of whom would, of a consequence, be lost to the Church. This is not a mere conjecture; it is the expression of a fear which has its foundation in facts. In cases where neither Catholic or Protestant is fervent in his or her attachment to religion it is perfectly needless to say that the religious education of the children will be either altogether neglected, or carried on in such wise as to achieve no appreciable results. Again, when the mother is a Catholic and the father an indifferentist, though the Catholic education of the girls may be carried through with

success, the matter becomes exceedingly precarious with boys, once they have reached the age when the irreligious or careless spirit of their father begins to impress itself upon their minds. The efforts of a mother, then, will hardly counterpoise the evil effects of the father's bad example, even though the mother in such a case be a woman of remarkable devotion to the Church, and the mother in such cases is not generally that. Once more, if the father be the Catholic party and the mother an indifferent Protestant, in nearly every case of the kind, the Catholic training of children amounts to nothing permanent, and their loss to the Church is practically assured.(1)

It is then a most important feature in the proper preparation for marriage that Cath-

1 Note. The above statements are founded mainly on experience gained during three years of missionary work in six dioceses of the United States, and from carefully canvassed expressions of bishops and priests. I might add, as a matter of interest in this connection, that within the limits of a country parish of which I am at present pastor, I have found O'Briens, Sullivans, Murphys McNulties, Finnegans, Conways and O'Connors, all without a single exception, Protestants. I carefully investigated the matter and found that defections through mixed marriages have caused this lamentable state of affairs.

olics should select only Catholics. The selection of one outside the pale of the Church is not only against her laws, but it is taking an alarming risk, both for one's own faith, and for the faith of the little ones who may be born as a result of the union. We come now to two more important considerations, which have relations to the period of courtship. The first of these deals with the conduct of the persons most concerned. It is an unhappy fact that many young persons endeavor to persuade themselves that the law of God, with respect to perfect chastity, does not bind them as rigorously during the period of company-keeping, as before their attachment sprang up. Hence, they both allow and practise familiarities, some of which are dangerous and others are positively sinful. I am fully conscious of the fact that this is an extremely delicate topic, yet no sermon upon the necessary preparation of marriage deals sufficiently with the subject, unless this unfortunate phase of courtship is touched upon. Let it be well understood and accepted that a marriage engagement does not change the law

concerning personal purity one jot or tittle. Therefore, a young man and woman during courtship, whether before or after a promise of marriage has been exchanged, are not allowed (so far as sinfulness is concerned) any more familiarities with one another than they would be with utter strangers. Once more, those demonstrations of ardent affection, which induce the proximate danger of grave sin, are themselves mortally sinful. Hence, a courtship that is characterized by such disorders is an abomination in the sight of God, and invites His curse upon the prospective union. Such a courtship robs the marriage ceremony of one of its chief adornments, for it can no longer be the uniting of two innocent hearts, but rather the joining of two souls that have been steeped in corruption. Would to God that all this were better known and appreciated. Has that young man any pure love for a maiden, with whose virtue he would dare to trifle? Has he genuine respect for the girl, whom he would sacrifice to his disorderly inclinations? Does such a person give any reliable evidence that he is fitted to be a

good, faithful husband and a model father? On the other hand, let me ask, what is to be thought of that young woman's appreciation of her honor and virtue, who fearing, that by a right course of conduct, she would lose the love of this young animal, is willing to allow him liberties that fill her soul with sin. Can such a disposition enhance her fitness for the positions of wife and mother? If the affections of a man can be retained only at such a horrible price, they are not only to be freely sacrificed, but should be regarded as a pestiferous infection to be avoided at all hazards.

What I have said does not impugn those modest tokens of love that are exchanged by loving Christian hearts, for from these are excluded everything that would suggest sensuality, grossness or anything which should bring a blush of shame to a decent Catholic girl's cheek.

The second consideration relative to courtship, deals with its duration. Though hasty marriages are to be avoided, since they are rash, inconsiderate and ill-advised, yet there is no just reason for prolonging a

courtship for a lengthy period since it is fraught with danger to both souls. The usual economic excuses given for putting off marriage from month to month and even year to year, are unworthy (save in rare cases) of any serious considerations. It may be added, too, that courtships which are prolonged into years are often a source of disedification, besides being the butt of unkindly humorous criticism. These courtships, I have said, are fraught with danger to both souls. The danger which is present in nearly every period of company-keeping is emphasized and increased when the courtship is unduly prolonged and the association in many such cases becomes so thoroughly disorderly that each of the parties is a proximate occasion of mortal sin for the other. The situation becomes so grave, frequently, that there is a serious obligation to marry without delay or to separate entirely.

The termination of courtship is, of course, the marriage ceremony and we will extend our subject so far as to say something about that event.

The purely religious side of the marriage rite does not receive, nowadays, its proper attention. It has become the fashion to eliminate the mass, and even to celebrate marriage toward the close of the day, except when for reasons of an absolutely worldly character, it is performed at noon. Catholics, generally, are not aware, perhaps, that the real Catholic marriage ceremony is inseparable from the Holy Sacrifice, and that the brief ceremony which takes place when the Mass is omitted, does not include the nuptial benediction of the Church. When the Church greets a couple on the threshold of marriage, with her full ceremonial, the sight is most impressive and inspiring, and it is an object-lesson that accentuates the sacredness of Christian marriage. She gives the contracting parties places of honor and interrupts her most solemn service in several places, to address herself directly to the espoused, reminding them of the gravity of their act, and pouring out blessings upon them. She insists upon the fact that the sacrament, which has just been received, is a symbol of that union which exists between

Jesus Christ and His spouse, the Church. One cannot read the words of the solemn nuptial blessing without being deeply impressed with the nobility and holiness of the marriage tie.

Catholics, contemplating marriage, should then conform to the spirit of the Church, by entering into the married state before the altar, when the Lamb of God is about to be slain for them that their union may receive abundantly of Divine blessings. Marriage is an honorable thing, "a great sacrament," therefore, it should be celebrated with every feature of religious pomp with which the Church invests it. Couples, at times, insist with the priest that their marriages must be of as quiet a character and as secret as possible. Apart from the cases, where public decency requires that the marriage ceremony be secretly performed, such prejudices are to be strongly condemned. The secret marriage is a slight upon that honorable institution, which Christ made a sacrament of the New Law, and which is as we have said the foundation of the entire social fabric.

Prepare well, then, for this extremely important step. Know well the companion to whom you will commit yourself for life. Be not satisfied with any one who is not entitled to your respect, as well as your love. Trust not your own judgment, but remember that parents and the ministers of God should play important parts in the matter of aiding and directing you, especially before you solemnly engage yourself. Marry within the fold. Realize that the most promising mixed marriage probably holds bitterness in store for you. Let your conduct during the time of courtship be marked by the most delicate appreciation for propriety. Fortify yourselves by prayer and the sacraments, and endeavor to cultivate right notions as to the sacredness of marriage. With this sort of preparation, you will approach the altar with pure and confiding hearts, and God will bless your unions, and strengthen you against the trials and tests, which are bound to be the lot of all who enter the married state.

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